



Ex Libris



Robert Baldwin Hardyce Barr

NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE



THOMAS J. BATA LIBRARY
TRENT UNIVERSITY



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2019 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

THE LIFE AND LETTERS
of ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS



ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, 1781, AS A POST-CAPTAIN.

From a pastel by Daniel Gardner, in the possession of Viscountess Harcourt, D.B.E.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS *of* ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS

BY
G. CORNWALLIS-WEST

ILLUSTRATED



LONDON
ROBERT HOLDEN & CO. LTD.
31 GOWER STREET, W.C.1

1927

TO MY FRIEND HARRY LAWSON, VISCOUNT
BURNHAM, G.C.V.O., THROUGH WHOSE GOOD
OFFICES I WAS ENABLED TO PUBLISH A SERIES OF ARTICLES
IN THE "DAILY TELEGRAPH" UPON ADMIRAL CORN-
WALLIS AND THEREBY GAINED THE NECESSARY EN-
COURAGEMENT TO WRITE HIS LIFE.

FOREWORD

No life of Admiral Cornwallis has hitherto been written. His reputation has been overshadowed somewhat by that of his better-known elder brother—the Marquess Cornwallis—who died as Governor-General of India in 1805.

In the Royal Navy his name has been commemorated by the battleship *Cornwallis*, launched at Blackwall in 1901. She carried out distinguished service in the Dardanelles, and was subsequently sunk off Malta on the 11th of January, 1917.

Cornwallis commanded the main fleet of Britain during the days when Napoleon's threatened invasion in 1801, and again in 1805, was a very real menace to this country.

It is, we well know, "the Navy whereon, under the good providence of God, the wealth, safety and strength of the Kingdom chiefly depend"; yet, how few of our countrymen to-day remember those distinguished officers whose names were on every man's lips in their own days, and to whom were entrusted the command of our fleets and the ultimate safety of our country in those early years of the nineteenth century!

Major Cornwallis-West has performed a public service in writing the life of this great sailor, and I commend his pages to those who take pride in the history of our country and in the Navy in which Cornwallis rendered such noble service.

BEATTY.

July 1927.

222543

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

To students of naval history, and indeed to those whose literary tastes lean towards the study of the lives of eminent men, it may appear curious that no biography of Admiral Sir William Cornwallis has ever been written. The only explanation I can offer is that for almost a century the greater part of his correspondence, papers, etc., lay hidden away in attics and cellars at Newlands Manor, and were forgotten. It was not until 1898 that they were discovered.

The late Mr. John Leyland, who had undertaken to edit the *Blockade of Brest* for the Navy Records Society, approached my father, and asked whether he had any of the Admiral's papers in his possession, which would be of use to him in connection with the work he had undertaken. A search was made and a box marked "Brest 1803-5" was found. As this was the sole period of the Admiral's activities which interested Mr. Leyland, the remaining boxes were left untouched. The first-mentioned box was returned to its hiding-place in 1901. Sometime after my father's death in 1917 I came across them, and I at once decided to go carefully through them. The task was highly interesting, but took time, and I was not able to start work until 1920.

In the spring of last year I approached Lord Burnham with a view to publishing a series of articles on the Admiral's papers in the *Daily Telegraph*. He agreed to the suggestion, and they duly appeared in August and September 1926. The readers of that great newspaper appear to have appreciated them, as I received many letters from persons quite unknown to me of a congratulatory nature. Indeed, it was on account of this that I decided to write the Admiral's life.

Here I must digress for a moment to recount an extraordinary link with the past. One of the letters I received was from a Mr. John C. Haswell, an ex-chief-gunner in the Navy. Writing from Portsmouth, he relates how his father, who was born in 1792, "joined the Navy in 1803, and was drafted on board the *Revenge*," and how this ship "joined the fleet off Ushant in July

1805." He proceeds to say that subsequently his father's ship was engaged in the battle of Trafalgar, where—to quote his own words—"John Haswell, as a boy 3rd class volunteer, did duty as a powder monkey at 1st and 2nd guns starboard on the lower deck that glorious day." It is so remarkable that a man whose father fought at Trafalgar should be alive in 1927, that I cannot refrain from mentioning it. Mr. John C. Haswell, to judge by the excellence of his handwriting, must himself be hale and hearty.

Cornwallis was a great Englishman, and a man who not only inspired the love of his friends and relations, but the admiration and affection of the majority of his most eminent naval contemporaries, as well as the respect and friendship of many of those political administrators under whom he served. It could not be otherwise than that a man of this nature should possess qualities of the finest type, both in his private as well as his public life. It has been my endeavour, with the material at my disposal, to write his biography in such a way as to show the kind of man he really was. It is not intended that this volume should be considered as a treatise on naval history covered by that period of the Admiral's career. I do not feel qualified to write one; and, indeed, so far as the latter and most important part of his service is concerned, far abler pens than mine have already dealt with it.

To avoid confusion I think it right to state that the families of Cornwallis and West are not related by any ties of blood. My father had to add the name of Cornwallis to that of West upon the death of his mother in 1888. That lady was a Miss Whitby and the only daughter and heiress of Mrs. John Whitby, to whom the Admiral left his entire property. Captain Whitby, whose name often appears in this volume, was First Flag-Lieutenant and then Flag-Captain to Cornwallis. Notwithstanding the difference in their ages and rank, they were bosom friends, and for nearly fifteen years were always together either at sea or at Newlands, a place the Admiral had built for himself near Lymington. Whitby married Miss Symonds in 1802, and she at once became part of the "ménage," and continued to live at, and look after the property when the Admiral and her husband were at sea.

The greater number of the letters and documents quoted are in my possession, and I have also incorporated much that appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* articles already referred to.

At some time during her life my grandmother wrote, but never published, a short biographical sketch of the Admiral's later years, after he had retired from the Service, and went to reside permanently at Newlands. In it she mentions that during the last year of his life he destroyed many papers. This fact may account for some of the gaps one has encountered when endeavouring to join up consecutively the different phases of his career.

I am most grateful to Sir Leicester Harmsworth for having placed his collection of Admiral Cornwallis's papers at my disposal. Also to Mrs. Percy Leigh-Pemberton, to whose father, the late Cornwallis Wykeham-Martin, my grandmother left a selection of the Admiral's papers. This lady has been kind enough to give me complete access to these, and my most sincere thanks are due to her. No life of Admiral Cornwallis would have been complete without perusal of these two collections. I acknowledge my gratitude to Mr. D. M. Smith, on the staff of the Admiralty Library, for his kindness in keeping me straight on many technical matters, and for having put innumerable Admiralty orders, letters, etc., at my disposal. These documents covered the period between 1764-1806, and a perusal of them was absolutely necessary if this volume was to be accurate. I am also indebted to Mr. Charles Burton, for the loan of one or two letters, and to Lieut.-Commander J. H. Owen, R.N., for looking through my MS.

In all letters, etc., mentioned in this volume the capital lettering and spelling have been left as originally written : punctuation has been added in order to facilitate their reading. Speaking from personal experience, I have always found that nothing is so annoying as having to study footnotes printed in minute type. For this reason I have dispensed with them entirely, and used square brackets [. . .] instead, following immediately on the context to which, had a footnote been used, it would have referred. Ordinary brackets (. . .) are used in the ordinary way. Practically all the letters sent to, or written by, the Admiral end in the extravagant language of the day—I have the honour to be your very humble, faithful, and obedient servant. The reader is asked to read the use of “etc. . . . etc.” as signifying this phraseology.

G. C.-W.

September 1927.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD BY EARL BEATTY	5
AUTHOR'S FOREWORD	7

FIRST PHASE 1755-1776

FROM MIDSHIPMAN TO POST-CAPTAIN

CHAPTER		
I.	1758-1762	19
II.	1763-1764	27
III.	1765-1771	36
IV.	1772-1776	47
V.	1776	55

SECOND PHASE 1777-1789

FROM POST-CAPTAIN TO COMMODORE

AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND WAR WITH FRANCE AND SPAIN

I.	1777	67
II.	1777	74
III.	1777-1778	82
IV.	1779	88
V.	1780	95
VI.	1781	105
VII.	1782	110
VIII.	1782	116
IX.	1782	131
X.	1783-1789	139

CONTENTS

THIRD PHASE

1789-1793

FROM COMMODORE TO REAR-ADMIRAL

IN COMMAND OF EAST INDIA SQUADRON—WAR WITH
FRANCE RENEWED

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	1789	151
II.	1789-1790	162
III.	1790	176
IV.	1790	182
V.	1790	190
VI.	1791	197
VII.	1791	206
VIII.	1791	216
IX.	1791-1792	228
X.	1792	235
XI.	1792-1793	248

FOURTH PHASE

1794-1800

FROM REAR-ADMIRAL TO ADMIRAL

I.	1794-1795	259
II.	1795	266
III.	1795	274
IV.	1795	281
V.	1795	291
VI.	1795-1796	305
VII.	1796	313
VIII.	1796	322
IX.	1796-1800	342

FIFTH PHASE

1801-1802

FIRST BLOCKADE OF BREST

I.	1801	349
II.	1801	357
III.	1801	368
IV.	1801-1802	373

SIXTH PHASE

1803-1819

THE SECOND BLOCKADE OF BREST AND FINAL RETIREMENT

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. 1803	387
II. 1803	394
III. 1804	401
IV. 1804	407
V. 1804	416
VI. 1804	423
VII. 1804	429
VIII. 1804	438
IX. 1804	448
X. 1804	459
XI. 1805	467
XII. 1805	473
XIII. 1805	478
XIV. 1805	484
XV. 1805	492
XVI. 1806	502
XVII. 1806-1819	509
INDEX	523

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, 1781, AS A POST-CAPTAIN	Frontispiece
<i>From a pastel by Daniel Gardner, in the possession of Viscountess Harcourt, D.B.E.</i>	
	FACING PAGE
COUNTESS CORNWALLIS	85
<i>From a pastel by Daniel Gardner, in the possession of Messrs. Thos. Agnew & Son.</i>	
CAPTAIN JOHN WHITBY	196
<i>From a painting by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of the author.</i>	
RETREAT OF ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, JUNE, 1795. "ROYAL SOVEREIGN" SHORTENING SAIL TO ALLOW "BELLEROPHON" TO GO AHEAD	261
<i>From a painting by Clarkson Stanfide, R.A., in the possession of the author.</i>	
RETREAT OF ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, JUNE, 1795. "ROYAL SOVEREIGN" BEARING UP TO PROTECT THE "MARS"	263
<i>From a painting by Clarkson Stanfide, R.A., in the possession of the author.</i>	
REPRODUCTION OF TELEGRAM SENT TO ADMIRAL VILLIARAT-JOYEUSE ANNOUNCING ARMISTICE	370
MRS. JOHN WHITBY, AGED 21	387
<i>From a painting by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of the author.</i>	
MRS. WHITBY AT THE AGE OF 35	473
<i>From a miniature by Emma Helena Kendrick in the possession of the author.</i>	

FIRST PHASE

1755—1776

FROM MIDSHIPMAN TO POST-CAPTAIN

CHAPTER I

1755-1762

WILLIAM CORNWALLIS, or, to give him his full title, Admiral the Hon. Sir William Cornwallis, K.C.B., was born on February 25, 1744. He was the fourth son of Charles, 1st Earl Cornwallis, and Elizabeth his wife, who was the eldest daughter of Viscount Townshend, a statesman who lived during the reign of George I. Cornwallis was born and bred in Suffolk, where his family had been settled for many centuries : its founder having been one Thomas Cornwalleys (as the name was then spelt), a wealthy merchant and Sheriff of London in the fourteenth century. It is more than probable that this man was a direct descendant of Philip de Cornwaleys, who was a natural son of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, by Joan de Valletort, widow of Sir Alexander Okeston. Richard was the second son of King John of England. As a boy of nine Cornwallis was sent to Harrow, where he remained but a very short time, for in 1755, when eleven years of age, he joined the Navy, a perfectly natural proceeding in those days. War broke out with France the first year of his service, and during the fifty odd years he was on the active list, no less than twenty-five were spent fighting against France.

Being only a Midshipman (or the equivalent rating of the period), his name does not appear in any particular circumstance in the Admiralty records, but, as it has been possible to trace the ships in which he served in that capacity, he certainly experienced plenty of fighting, and in a good school. He was first appointed to the *Newark* in the fleet of thirty-eight ships sent to North America in 1758 under Boscawen : convoying an army of 14,000 men under General Amherst. After being transferred to the *Kingston*, Cornwallis was present at the reduction of Louisburg. On his return to England he was, in March 1759, again transferred, this time to the *Dunkirk*, under Hawke. His ship took part in

the battle of Quiberon Bay, when the French Fleet under Conflans was almost entirely destroyed. The boy had started well. In four years' service he had sailed some thousands of miles, been present at two important engagements, and had experienced the thrills of victory. Soon after this the *Dunkirk* was ordered to the Mediterranean, and formed part of a squadron under Admiral Saunders, which was blockading some French ships in one of the harbours of Crete. In December 1760 Cornwallis was transferred to the *Neptune*, on board of which ship the Admiral's flag was flying. Whether it was from the personal influence his relations at home were able to exercise, or that the boy had merited the notice of the Admiral, is not possible to say, as up to this date no letters either to or from him are available. Saunders, however, was not the type of man to take any notice of a young officer, no matter who he was, unless he had a high opinion of him professionally.

Although only seventeen years of age, early in April 1761 he was made Acting Fourth Lieutenant of the *Thunderer*, to which ship Saunders had transferred his flag on leaving the Mediterranean for home. Apparently his rapid promotion caused him to take life more seriously, as from now on he appears to have kept the wonderfully affectionate, and in many cases interesting, letters written to him by his mother, as well as those he received from other members of his family. He had evidently lost no time in apprising her of his promotion, for she writes to him on the 18th of that month :—

“We talk here of peace; however I doubt our military young folks will stay but a very short time with us, for it is supposed all things will be carried on with the same spirit till the peace is actually concluded; indeed appearances confirm that supposition, as our expedition sailed since these strong reports of peace. . . .

“I shall be very impatient to know how you like your new command and your new shipmates.”

It is not difficult to appreciate how great was the bond of affection which existed between all the members of Cornwallis's family, every letter to him displays it. In May of this year he experiences his first bereavement; for he hears of the death of his brother Harry. This promising young officer had fallen a victim to the hardships of war. His father wrote :—

“I am very sorry that I must relate to you a misfortune that has befallen our family, which has given us all the most distressing affliction ; your poor brother Harry, who was on his road, coming home from Germany, was seized with a violent fever, which occasioned his death. We believe it was contracted by the great fatigues he underwent the latter end of the campaign, and lying frequently out in the open air. But misfortunes that it pleases God to send must be submitted to, and I hope time will relieve our present affliction. Your brother, Lord Brome, is at present here, and seems to be in perfect health, and a great comfort to us all, as he seems to be a very promising young man, and, if he lives, likely to be a great blessing and of great benefit to his family. He is got to be Lieutenant-Colonel to an old regiment, which is in Germany, so that he must go again there. But peace is so much talked of, and so much believed, that I hope his stay there will not be long. I don’t know whether the word peace is an agreeable word to you seamen. But it is a happy circumstance that you have got the step of being a lieutenant before it takes place, and I hope and believe, you are very likely to do well in your profession, and be a comfort to us all. Your brother Jemmy is at Oxford and seems to do very well there. Molly is very well. We are very glad to hear from you whenever we can.”

[The Molly referred to in this letter was Cornwallis’s sister. She married Samuel Whitbread, the well-known brewer, in 1769 ; and died in childbirth the following year.]

His eldest brother, Lord Brome, also wrote. At an early age (he was only six years older than Cornwallis) the serious side to his character was developing.

“Life is so very uncertain,” he said, “and happiness so seldom to be met with, that I question very much whether the loss of life can be looked upon as a very great misfortune ; but the loss of a brother and friend that I loved so sincerely, as I did my dear Harry, is a most shocking and irreparable stroke. My only comfort is in you and Jemmy. I am vastly happy to hear so good accounts of you ; I dare say you will one day or other make a figure in your profession. All I can say is, that nobody can love you better than I do, that I shall always endeavour to prove myself worthy of your esteem and friendship, that I shall at all times and on all occasions do all in my power to serve and pro-

mote you, and that half the contents of my purse will be always at your service. Excuse my writing any more on this melancholy occasion."

Earl Cornwallis prophesied well. All three of his surviving sons became highly distinguished members of their several professions. Lord Brome, his eldest son, succeeded his father as 2nd Earl, and was subsequently created Marquis Cornwallis. "Jemmy" at an early age was elected a fellow of Merton, entered the Church, and became a celebrated divine.

His ship the *Thunderer* having been ordered to refit, young Cornwallis took the opportunity of going up for and passing his examination for promotion. He came through the ordeal successfully, but it cannot be traced that his appointment as Acting Fourth Lieutenant was actually confirmed by the Admiralty, although he evidently continued to serve in that capacity, for in June of that year his father, ever mindful of his son's welfare, writes from Culford, the family seat in Suffolk:—

"I am very sensible it must be more expensive to you now you are a lieutenant. I am very willing to allow what is necessary to you, and would by no means have you live worse than your brother officers. I suppose you will not be able to do with less than a hundred a year. . . . We have had a French minister at London for three weeks. It was thought his coming was sure to produce peace, but as far as the public can see, it does not seem to go on very fast."

Reading this letter from the present-day point of view it seems curious that a French Minister should have been in London when the two countries were still at war.

The following July (1761) the *Thunderer*, together with the *Modeste* and *Thetis*, was sent on detached service. Captain Proby commanded the little squadron, and his orders were to watch the movements of two French ships, the *Achille* and *Bouffon*, which were supposed to be in Cadiz. "Standing in on the 14th (July) the French ships were missed. Captain Proby immediately disposed his force in the most likely manner to intercept the enemy, and on the afternoon of the 16th got sight of them; after a chase until one o'clock on the morning of the 17th, the *Thunderer* came up with the *Achille*, when a very sharp though short contest ensued, the action continued little more than half an hour before the French ship struck. This battle must, how-

ever, have been very hot while it lasted, as the loss on the English side was 17 killed and 113 wounded, amongst whom were the Second and Third Lieutenants, and the *Thunderer* was much disabled in her masts and rigging. About the same time that Captain Proby commenced the engagement, the *Thetis* brought the *Bouffon* to action; in about half an hour, on the *Modeste* coming up, she struck." [*Naval Chronicle*, vol. vii, 1802.]

"During this engagement one of the *Thunderer*'s quarter-deck guns burst and blew up part of the poop, killing and wounding many men and setting the ship on fire. In the confusion naturally attending such an occurrence and at such a time, the coolness of Lieutenant Cornwallis was remarkable and attracted the notice of his gallant Captain." [From an essay on Cornwallis by Admiral R. H. Anstruther, R.N.]

The news of this engagement appears to have reached England sooner than was usually the case at that period, for in August Earl Cornwallis writes a short letter to his son testifying his sincere joy "at his having come off scathless," and going on to say :—

"Your mother has wrote you so long a letter that I shall only add a line to testify my sincere joy at your happy escape in so dangerous an engagement as you have had. I am very glad you have seen such a close engagement, as it may be of use to you, and you will gain reputation by having been an officer in a ship that has behaved so well. I have desired Lord Carysfort, brother to Captain Proby, to recommend you to him, though I daresay the Captain would naturally be kind to you. . . .

"I have but one piece of advice to give you at present, which is to endeavour to keep company with the Captains of ships and your superior officers as much as you can. It will certainly be of advantage to you."

The advice at the end of this letter, and again in the following, may be considered worldly, but it was sound, especially in those days when preferment meant so much in the early stages of an officer's career. On September 1st his father writes at greater length :—

"I hope before you receive this, you will have received a letter from your mother and me, congratulating you upon your safety, after the sharp engagement you had been in. . . .

"You can't imagine the pleasure we had in hearing of your

safety. I don't know whether this engagement of the *Thunderer* may occasion her coming home sooner than might have been intended, but, be that as it will, I wish you all happiness. In my letter, joined to your mother's, I recommended much to you to keep, as much as you can, company with the captains of ships, and your superiors. I can't help repeating that recommendation to you, as I am very sure it will be of the greatest advantage to you, in every particular, to your future promotions, to your good character in your profession, and the knowledge the Admiral and Captains have of you is a very essential thing for you, as in all professions the character superior officers give of young men is all in all. Your brother, Lord Brome, has found the benefit of it; he is known to every General in the army he serves in, and has their universal good word and approbation, which has helped him with ease to be a Lieutenant-Colonel very young, and will carry him on with applause. I had a letter from him yesterday, he was very well. Peace is talked of very much, and it is said a week will determine either peace or another year's war. . . .

"I wish you all happiness, and all I can do to promote it you may be sure of."

Cornwallis remained in the *Thunderer* until the early summer of the following year (1762) when he returned home from the Mediterranean. He was little more than a boy, and it is possible to imagine with what pleasure he looked forward to seeing his parents and the shores of England once more: but he was doomed to disappointment. His father had died on June 21st. A letter from his brother James, now Dean of Durham, acquaints him of the melancholy fact upon his arrival at Portsmouth. He is given a few days' leave, which no doubt were spent with his sorrowing mother, after which he returns to his ship, where he again takes up the duties of an Acting Lieutenant, as there is nothing to show, even at this date, that his appointment had ever been confirmed. What a wonderful surprise, therefore, he must have had when he received the following letter from his mother a fortnight later:—

"The heavy affliction that has lately happened to us, has made me incapable of writing to you for some time. My happiness is for ever gone, but it is in all my children's power to lighten my misery by behaving well in their several stations. I have no doubt of having this comfort. I am left by your father's will

guardian to Jemmy and you. Molly told you that I had applied to Lord Halifax for a sloop for you, and yesterday I had a letter to acquaint me you were appointed to command the *Wasp* sloop. Upon enquiry I find it is at Plymouth, therefore I hope I shall have the satisfaction of seeing you soon at home, as I suppose a notification will immediately be sent to you from the Admiralty. Till that comes I imagine you are to take no notice of the information.

“As it is of great consequence to you to get the rank of Captain before a peace, I don’t question that you will be so careful in your conduct in this command as it will make it easy for your friends to get you soon to be a Post-Captain. You are very young, but I hope you have sense and prudence enough to consider your whole future happiness consists in getting an established character of a good officer, and a sober man. You will then rise by your own merit, which is ten thousand times more satisfactory than the doing it by the assistance of friends, supposing you should have them, which is not always the case. Not a word of this is said from the least suspicion I have of you, but comes purely from the anxious anxiety of my heart for your doing well.”

One cannot help but smile at this letter. The first part so clearly stating the steps his mother had taken to further her son’s interests, and the last part, as it were an afterthought, telling him that advancement through merit is the natural rung in the ladder of a man’s career. She knew his character, and forearms herself against any possible criticism on his part. The Admiralty did not keep him in suspense, for they sent for him almost immediately after he had received his mother’s letter, which was correct in every detail. He was given command of the *Wasp* sloop. Thus he walked into the Admiralty holding an acting commission as a Lieutenant, and walked out a Master and Commander: not bad for a young man who was not yet nineteen years of age. Quick promotion even in those days, and, as his subsequent career proved, entirely justified.

After his appointment Cornwallis wrote what was probably his first letter to the Admiralty, and, curiously enough, it was to ask for leave “On account of his having been so long out of England.” This request does not appear to have upset their Lordships, as they granted him eight days. The young Commander’s consternation can better be imagined than described

when he sees an announcement in the newspaper that the *Wasp*, his ship, had sailed, and had arrived at Belle Isle. He immediately writes to the Admiralty that he wishes to forfeit his leave in order to join her, and that "he proposes to take passage in the *Druid*, which ship was also, according to the newspaper, about to proceed to the same place." Without waiting for a reply, he dashes down to Plymouth to give effect to his intentions. But the Admiralty forestalled him; they instructed the Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth to curb the young man's energy, and go one better in their beneficence, as they informed him they had changed their mind about the *Wasp*, but intended giving him command of the *Swift*, a new sloop which was being built at Limehouse.

Cornwallis returned to London and took up his residence at his mother's house in Hill Street. He appears to have settled down to some months of inactivity, as the *Swift* was not completed until late in December, and it was not until January 1763 that she was actually commissioned.

CHAPTER II

1763-1764

IN February 1763 Cornwallis was at Deptford, still in command of the *Swift*. He was not apparently under the orders of any flag-officer as he corresponds direct with the Admiralty. In March of that year, having received instructions to man ship and salute the Venetian Ambassador on his way up the Thames, he wrote complaining that he could not dress the ship as "The officers of the yard will not allow colours for that purpose." The following month he was ordered to proceed with his ship to Portsmouth, and there to report himself to Admiral Tyrrel, who had command of a squadron ordered to convoy transports and merchantmen destined for the West Indies.

At this date that part of the world was a hot-bed of yellow fever and men died like flies there. It was only natural that Countess Cornwallis was alarmed at the prospect of her son being sent to such an unhealthy climate. However, she makes the best of it.

"Your last letter was received with sorrow," she wrote. "I am afraid I ought to call it a foolish sorrow, as my reason tells me the sooner you go the better your chance, both in point of health and preferment. I shall be glad to hear you have reached Portsmouth, and hope they will not detain you long there.

"I have sent the letter to Admiral Tyrrel, and shall make all the enquiries in my power who is to be the other Admiral employed in the West Indies."

Cornwallis again hears from his mother on the 7th, more perturbed than ever, poor woman!

"Poor Mrs. Harding has lost her son in the East Indies; he died of a fever. I hope you will be so careful of yourself as to do all in your power to make the West Indies more lucky to your mother. . . .

“Everybody is going or gone out of town, and we poor souls who inhabit this place all the year round are quiet kind of animals, [so] that all noise and quarrelling will soon subside.”

And again on May 10th she writes :—

“I have this moment received your letter and am glad you are arrived at Spithead. How poor I am in joys when I can say I am glad you are at a place that is farther distant than you before were, and that it is with the hopes of your going still farther, and what is worse to a place I dread ; but I trust you will for my sake keep your blood cool as you know into what sort of a climate you are going. I have sent a note to Mr. Adair to acquaint him with your being at Spithead, and after having expressed my earnest wishes that you might not be detained there, have desired him to acquaint me as soon as he knew whether you were to be dispatched directly, or to wait for to convoy the transports. You are apt to suspect my saying too much always ; I assure you I mentioned nothing from you but only that you were at Spithead, the rest was only my own curiosity, as he knew what strong reasons I had to wish you might be dispatched immediately.”

Peace with France and Spain had been signed in February of this year : but in his mother's eyes the dreaded yellow fever was more to be feared than shot and shell.

Before his departure for the West Indies, Cornwallis heard once more from his mother and sister. The former complains that she is worried about the non-completion of the lease of a London house she has taken from an old lady aged sixty-nine who had just married a Scotch officer aged nineteen. “What dependence can you have upon such a foolish old woman ?” she asks. His sister wrote at the same time with reference to the possibility of her becoming engaged to be married :—

“I am obliged to you for your good wishes in a certain affair. You know my sentiments upon that head ; prudence and a horror of dependence are the inducements. How this will end I cannot pretend to guess, he has so far obtained his wish in having had a sight of me ; how his inclinations may now stand I know not. . . . You may depend upon my not exposing myself in showing too great eagerness.

“I was at Almack's last night, and such sort of doings which you will say *pish*, was I to give you account.”

After an uneventful voyage Cornwallis wrote to acquaint his

mother of his safe arrival ; she in the meanwhile has spared no exertion to get him promoted a Post-Captain before the general reshuffling of Ministers, which it became apparent would happen when Lord Bute retired from office. Halifax, who was First Lord, was succeeded by Lord Egmont in Grenville's new Administration. On August 7th she replied :—

“ It was vastly kind and good in you to remember your poor old mother, in catching an opportunity of letting her hear you were safe and well as far as Barbadoes on your voyage. . . .

“ As soon as I heard Admiral Burnaby had kissed hands for the command of the West India squadron, which (having no acquaintance in town) information came from the newspapers, I wrote to Miss Ottley, whose aunt he married. This was on a Friday, and the Monday following Mr. Ottley brought Sir William to me, who expressed great civility, and desire of obliging me. You may imagine I did not omit the giving him to understand Post was the favour we wanted. Some few days afterwards, by a letter from Miss Ottley, I was informed that Sir William wished I would get a letter of recommendation to that purpose from either Lord Halifax or Sandwich, to prevent their recommending some other person to be appointed Post Captain, as in that case, he should be obliged to obey them, although his inclination would be with you. Upon which I dispatched a servant to Frognaal for advice. My brother [Charles, 3rd Viscount Townshend] (who, I desire you would remember, has been very kind in this affair) bid me write immediately to Lord Halifax, and yesterday I sent a servant with my letter to Bushey. I asked the favour only from myself, mentioned no other person's name, and had the following words returned with a letter sealed enclosed to Sir William Burnaby.

“ ‘ I have great pleasure in obeying your Ladyship's commands, and in endeavouring to be of further service to your son. I shall therefore enclose a letter to Admiral Burnaby, which I heartily wish may have the desired effect. ’ ”

On August 29th she again wrote :—

“ [Sir William] Burnaby in his first visit to me seemed very well inclined, and in his last, after he had received Lord Halifax's letter of recommendation, he gave me an absolute promise that he would make you a Post Captain. I am now writing by a merchant-man, as I hear there are two to sail for Jamaica soon ;

I shall send duplicates, one by each ship. Take care of your health and do not be out of spirits if things should remain in the same situation. You are very secure of being promoted, and indeed there is at this time so great a probability of a thorough change, that I am at this instant very sorry you went to the West Indies for what it is very likely you would have had as soon at home. There are none of my friends in town, so I can get no secret intelligence how things go on ; but this is certain, that Mr. Pitt was alone with the King from twelve o'clock till three yesterday noon at Buckingham House, numbers of people waiting at the gate with anxious countenances the whole time to observe him when he came out. What passed between His Majesty and him is out of my reach to learn, but I have since heard that Mr. Pitt was first sent for by His Majesty on Thursday last, and that he insisted upon some preliminaries that were not agreed to, and that His Majesty sent for him again yesterday. If this should be true it looks as if they came into his proposals. It is a very remarkable proceeding their choosing this conference should be made so public, as such things are usually kept quite private till they are settled. The park at that time was at the fullest ; he coming through in his gouty chair, which was left a great part of the time in the court, at last they took it into the hall. Mr. Grenville and some others came during this conference, but were not let in. Steel was at the door of Buckingham House when he came out, who says he looked pleasant."

After writing she is "afraid of being too troublesome at the Admiralty," and telling him of her further ideas for his advancement, she concludes by saying, "I think I am a strong instance in many particulars that an insignificant person with great attention may be of some use, although far short of their wishes."

This letter throws a curious side-light upon the political situation of that day. Owing to the death of the Earl of Egmont, one of the Triumvirate, as the three principal members of the Government were called, Grenville's Administration had received a severe shock. The King sent for Pitt, who, broken down in health as he was, obeyed the summons, but he proved impracticable and nothing came of it. Countess Cornwallis again writes on September 17th. She commences by telling him Pitt had declined to take office, but had thereby "gained

great credit by his behaviour," presumably with the Opposition, as she says, "The minority are not dejected." Her triumphant description of the roundabout ways in which she attempts to gain the ear of the new First Lord on behalf of her son are amusing though flagrant.

"I have long ago taken care that any draft of yours shall be accepted. I know you will not be extravagant, and I hope you know I shall both readily and willingly assist you with what money you want. I am careful for no other purpose but to be able to have it in my power to be useful, and shall take it unkindly if you do not apply to me for any wants you may have. James by this acquisition will soon be off my hands, therefore I shall be very well able to help you.

"When I wrote so far, I thought it might prevent all disappointment if I wrote to Sir William Burnaby to say I hoped the late change in the Ministry would make no alteration in the promise he had given me of making you Post-Captain the first vacancy. To which he answered that he would have me by all means acquaint Lord Egmont with Lord Halifax's recommendation, for, if Lord Egmont should recommend any other person, he should be obliged to prefer him before you. I immediately employed Lady Ferrers, a very near relation, and intimate friend to that family. Her Ladyship was very good and kind, but I imagine could not suppose that there could be any favour in doing of nothing, which was all I wanted of his lordship, yet by the answer she brought me I found he had puzzled the affair most extremely, for I could not guess what she asked. However, by a letter I wrote to Lord Egmont, and the friendly assistance of Admiral Rodney, I have had a very civil letter from Lord Egmont, and I think a full security of his not interfering; therefore if you are not already a Post Captain, I make no doubt you will be so upon the first vacancy after Admiral Burnaby comes to his command."

Cornwallis spent that winter in the West Indies and apparently suffered no ill-effects. Early in January 1764 his mother writes to him, telling him how grievously disappointed their relation, Admiral George Townshend, was in not being given the command of Greenwich, which was instead given to Rodney, a much younger man, despite the fact that he (Townshend) had been "so long an advocate of every Minister in power." In

March he hears from his sister, Lady Mary, who tells him of the death of their uncle, Lord Townshend.

“Lord Townshend died at Rainham ten days ago ; he has left everything to his eldest son. The lady he kept was not mentioned in his will ; what he gave her in his life-time does not appear, nor is it known whether he has any children by her living.” She goes on to say :—

“Lord Bute is come to town this week ; looks much the better for having lived quietly in the country these two or three months ; but I believe now has the lead just in the same manner as he used.”

It will be remembered how, when Lord Bute returned from his self-effacement, he exercised considerable influence upon the decisions of the Government.

In April Cornwallis received a gossipy letter from his mother, who wrote :—

“In this dearth of public news the town would have been at a loss for conversation had not Lady Susan Strangways married, last Saturday, Mr. O’Brien, the actor. Lord and Lady Ilchester, her father and mother, are much to be pitied ; she was reckoned both pretty and clever. . . .

“But you may be very secure of £100 a year from me, if I live ; when I die you know I have nothing to leave, and indeed the pleasure of my being able to be of some use to you is a great comfort to a kind of life that has not many pleasing things in it.”

Cornwallis had not yet received the promotion his mother had attempted to engineer ; and his hopes of it must have been somewhat damped when Admiral Sir A. Keppel wrote :—

“I am very sorry to tell you how ill your hopes have succeeded in this country. Sir William Burnaby’s having given commissions and not orders, as I understood he meant to do upon what I said to him, has prevented the inclinations of some in power from helping you. . . .

“Your friends and relations are much hurt at your failing, and think Sir William Burnaby has not used them as they expected. They seem, especially Lady Cornwallis, extremely anxious for your return to London.”

The Admiral goes on to say that he disapproves of this course ; as nothing was to be expected from the party then in power. This was sound advice, political influence meant a

great deal in those days, and, after all, the Cornwallis family were, and always had been, Whigs, and the other side held office. This letter must have been the cause of his remonstrating with his mother for having, as he thought, "allowed her eagerness for his promotion to outrun her discretion." Her answer is pathetic in its contrition. She writes: "Henceforth all my happiness consists in obeying your wishes." Poor lady, she thought she had acted for the best, and solely in his interest.

In the late summer of this year Cornwallis had the misfortune to run his ship ashore in a gale of wind, and only got her off by his own and his officers' and crew's exertions: but he seems to have lost most of his effects, and a certain amount of cash; for he is inundated with letters from his relations offering to assist him. All are delightfully warm-hearted and show how he was the much beloved Benjamin of his family. But his mother will depute to no one the right to assist her son. The first letter he gets is from his brother, dated London, October 14, 1764:—

"We have been in great anxiety about you, as the first report was that your ship was entirely lost; we thought this would vex you exceedingly, especially as I really think at present you are pretty sure of the first vacancy. I hope by this time you are got to Jamaica, and that the *Swift* is in a fair way of being fit for sea again. If you have lost anything by this accident, or are at all in want of money, I beg you will draw on me. I must again repeat my entreaties, that you will not now or at any other time be at all scrupulous about it, as I can assure you it will always be a very sincere pleasure to me to contribute all in my power to your comfort and happiness.

"Keppel talked to me much about your procuring a change with some Post Captain there; I cannot thoroughly understand him, but if anything of that sort can be done, I believe Lord Egmont will be inclined to serve you. If any sum of money should be necessary for it, for I have heard there are sometimes bargains of that sort, I will answer any draft that you may find it necessary to draw a month after sight. Perhaps I am talking very ignorantly, but I am so very anxious to have you made Post, that I would omit no possible means, and I think you could not lay out a sum of money to greater advantage. A thousand thanks for your mahogany spar; let me know if I can send you

anything from hence. Adieu, fortify your mind against all misfortunes and disappointments, and be as happy as you can."

On the 19th of the same month his mother writes from Hill Street :—

"I was so fortunate not to hear of the accident that befell you till I had it from your brother, who had a great deal of Company at Culford, and was informed by Admiral Keppel. He instantly came post to London to inquire all particulars. I assure you I was not more affected myself than he was. . . .

"I received your letter yesterday by the *Mary Ann*. I believe we both felt for the situation you had been in, nor were we easy at the description of your present ; the sloop broken to pieces, and upon an uninhabited island, not a house to shelter you from that scorching climate. His countenance was all uneasiness while he was reading your letter, it cleared however a little when he came to that part of your sending a boat full of your people on shore ; ' Very handsome,' he said, ' in William.' He gave me a letter for to send you last night, and is returned to Culford this morning, and has left orders with me to send you some porter. . . .

"Molly wrote from Culford to me, and my brother T[homas] T[ownshend] from Frognall to say they supposed you must have suffered by this accident, and desired they might assist you with money. I told them both that I was able to assist you with whatever money you wanted, and I would give up that pleasure to nobody. I must repeat again, my dear William, that I hope you will draw for what you want. Be assured I shall not only be able to answer your drafts, but shall have great pleasure that it is in my power to be of any service to you."

His next offer of help came from his sister Mary :—

"I was exceedingly happy," she wrote, "to hear of your safety in the imminent danger you had encountered ; and a very great satisfaction it was in my concern for the distress you must have suffered, to hear your behaviour and conduct in this trial met with so much approbation ; a great comfort to your friends, as well as to yourself, after the consciousness of doing right oneself, to be approved by others. I hope your loss has not been very great, which I beg may not be the least inconvenience to you, as I shall very readily and gladly contribute whatever you

require towards refitting you. I would have lodged some money immediately in Mr. Hoare's hands, to be ready for you whenever you drew upon him, but my mother desired I would defer it till I knew more particularly what supply you might want. I am sure it is needless to assure you you will ever be most heartily welcome to whatever assistance in money you may want, as I shall have the greatest pleasure in being of the least service. Therefore I hope you will be ingenuous in letting me know what sum you should require to reinstate you in your former possessions, that I might supply you with it directly, as I shall be excessively glad to have it in my power to accommodate you in the smallest degree. I think this way would be more useful to you than buying myself things to send you, as I can be no judge what you would like, besides the uncertainty of their ever reaching you. . . .

“The Suffolk people are much displeased with the Duke of Grafton for having no hounds; as the Duke of Cleveland has left this part of the world, they have no opportunity of fox-hunting at all, which you know to sportsmen is a grievous mortification.”

CHAPTER III

1765-1771

AFTER his narrow escape from shipwreck Cornwallis managed, with difficulty, to bring the *Swift* safely to Jamaica. Early the following year (1765) he took her home; she was paid off in April. In July of that year the Whigs once more came into power, and at last the goal of his mother's ambition was realized, as he was at once promoted Post-Captain by the new Administration. As no letters from his mother, or his other relatives, are in existence which express their delight at his promotion, he was probably at home and received their congratulations personally. To be a Post-Captain at twenty-one was quick work, even at that period of British naval history, and, so far as men who made a name for themselves in their profession, only equalled by Nelson and Barrington. Howe was a Post-Captain at twenty-two. The *Naval Chronicle* of January-July 1802 published a short biographical sketch of Cornwallis's career up to that date. In the somewhat flowery language of the period it says: "The subject of our memoir attained the rank of Post Captain at a time of life which encouraged him to look forward to the highest rank in his profession with a degree of certainty, and he seems to have eagerly embraced every opportunity of acquiring the experience necessary to qualify himself for the important commands to which he aspired. At an age that might have excused a wish to enter into the gaieties and luxury of the Capital, where peace seemed to invite him to repose, and enjoy the elegant society which his rank in life rendered familiar to him, he turned his thoughts on professional improvement alone."

Cornwallis's first command in his new rank was the *Prince Edward*, a frigate of 28 guns; he commissioned her in September 1765. In May 1766 he was with this ship at Woolwich, for he

writes to the Admiralty in May of that year complaining of the behaviour of the officers of a merchant vessel :—

SIR,—

Agreeable to my Instructions (which acquaints us in case Merchant Ships should presume to hoist the King's Colours, we are to seize them and send an Account thereof with Affidavits of the Fact to the Secretary of the Admiralty), I am to acquaint you that the Ship *Royal Charlotte*, Patrick Cooper, Master, from London bound to Jamaica came close to his Majesty's ship *Prince Edward* under my command, with a Pendant hoisted, the Master being absent, the Mate, John Peacock, having the Charge of the Ship, refused to deliver the colours, and when I sent a Boat aboard, was extremely insolent to the Officers, and encouraged his People to oppose ours, in striving to take the Pendant away; John Barnet, the Pilot, was also extremely Insolent, and one of our Men was stabbed by one of the Men belonging to the Merchant Ship in attempting to comply with his Officer's Orders; This appears to me so great an Insult to his Majesty's Service, that I think it my Duty to represent it, and beg that the offenders be prosecuted accordingly. The owner of the ship is Mr. John Peacock, of Cock Hill, London.

I am, etc.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

It should be stated that Masters of Merchant vessels were forbidden to fly the white or blue ensigns, but were supposed only to fly the red.

The assailant in this particular instant was prosecuted, and Cornwallis again writes to the Admiralty to the effect that "George Craig Seaman of H.M.S. *Prince Edward* who was wounded" is bound over to appear at the next assizes at Maidstone, where the offender is in goal." He further asks the Admiralty "to safeguard his interests as he was wounded in His Majesty's service." The Admiralty ordered the Commander-in-Chief at Chatham to bear him on ship's books until the Assizes were over.

In July of this year Cornwallis was appointed to command the frigate *Guadeloupe*, 28 guns, for service in the Mediterranean and the general protection of trade. In July of the

following year (1767) he was in Cadiz Bay, and again fell out with officers of the Merchant Service; this time in connection with Merchant seamen volunteering to serve in H.M. Navy. One cannot help having a certain amount of sympathy for the masters of trading vessels. It is hardly probable that they were overmanned themselves, and when in a foreign harbour, members of their crew announced their intention of leaving the ship in order to join a man-of-war lying nearby, it was not unnatural that they should resent it. Cornwallis writes to the Admiralty on the subject:—

I beg the favour of you to present this Letter with the enclosed Affidavit to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. I shall not mention the particulars as they are expressed in the Affidavit, but cannot help saying I have found the Masters of Merchant Ships in General not only disrespectful but very Insolent to the Officers of His Majesty's Ship, when a Man comes to enter and complains of being Illtreated, and brings evident Marks of it about him, the Master makes no Allowance for his entering into his Majesty's Service (by which in our Statutes relating to the Admiralty Anno Secundo Georgii Secundi, Chapter 36, Article 13, it expressly says a Man does not forfeit his Wages), but refuses to pay him.

I had a man come on board the other day to enter from a Merchant Ship in this Bay, his head was broke and his face much bruised I sent a Lieutenant to demand his Cloaths and Wages, the Master refused both, and threaten'd the Lieutenant for a Robbery upon his insisting the Man shou'd have his Cloaths.

I do not mention these as the only instances of that sort that have happen'd, nor do I know whether I am particularly unlucky, but this Treatment has so often happened to me, that tho' short of Complement I am Sorry when I see a Man come to enter, knowing he will lose what he has been perhaps two or three years slaving for, and that my Officers will be insulted in Attempting to get it.

I know we do not like writing of these Matters to their Lordships for fear of being thought troublesome, but I cannot help thinking if they were properly represented some Method would be found to Oblige Masters of Merchant Ships to behave

at least with Common Civility to the Officers of his Majesty's Ships, particularly in Foreign Ports, where this kind of Treatment (for the Master of the Brigantine's Answer was heard on board several Vessels in the Bay) gives those a strange Idea of his Majesty's Navy who so lately dreaded it.

I do not know whether the Master of the Brigantine can be prosecuted as he was Owner of the Vessel, and I believe is not going home, which is what encourages them in their Insolence, being totally out of the reach of all Law and every thing of the sort, but as I imagine the Tamely putting up with such Scandalous Treatment might be an Encouragement for them to proceed still further I thought it my duty to beg of you to represent it to their Lordships.

It is a strong letter, and for a young man of twenty-three exceptionally good, especially when one considers to whom it was written. But throughout his life in all his correspondence with the Admiralty Cornwallis was naturally courteous, but absolutely fearless. It evidently impressed the authorities; for the Admiralty minute was an instruction to Mr. Seddon to discover whether, "under the Act mentioned, or any subsequent Act of Parliament, seamen entering on board H.M.S. in Foreign ports were entitled to their wages." The affidavit mentioned is not available, but it is presumed it refers to what occurred on board the brigantine referred to. Mr. Seddon was solicitor to the Admiralty.

It is interesting to note to what extent the Government assisted trade in those days: England was at peace; but attacks by pirates had to be guarded against, and many parts of the northern coasts of Africa offered good shelter to, and bases of operations for, those scourges of the high seas.

Cornwallis had been sent to Cadiz by Commodore Spry, and his instructions were to proceed there on account of "Merchants of the British factory at Cadiz requiring a ship to convoy the balance of their trade to their correspondents in England" and to take on board his own ship "All such remittances of cash and jewels as the merchants of the factory shall desire." The *Guadeloupe* returned to England in September 1768, and was paid off in the following month. Cornwallis remained unemployed until

the following January, when he was again appointed to command her to proceed to North America. It will be remembered that at that time, in spite of the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766, relations between the colonists and the Mother Country were much strained. H.M. ships of war were used not only for patrolling the Newfoundland fisheries, but to enforce the Customs laws, which made it practically impossible for any country but Great Britain to trade with the American colonies, and vice versa. Before proceeding on his voyage Cornwallis received general orders from Commodore Byron, who was in command of the North American Squadron. That officer was at home and deputed his powers to Cornwallis, who, in addition, received separate instructions of an interesting nature. The following shows with what jealousy Great Britain guarded her fishery and trading monopolies :—

By His Excellency the Hon^{ble} John Byron,
Governor and Commander in Chief in and
over the Island of Newfoundland, the Coast
of Labrador, and all the Territories dependent
thereupon, &c. &c.

WHEREAS I have received Authentick Accounts, that in the Month of July 1768, a French Ship of Warr, Named the *Unicorn*, Visited several Ports within my Government, particularly Creamelia, where the Captain of the said ship, Interfered in Matters relative to the Laws and Government of the Country.

In case you should meet with any French Ship of Warr within the Limits of your Station, you are in the most Civil and Friendly manner to enquire of the Captain the Occasion of his coming, and should he be driven there, by necessity or Distress, you are to offer him Assistance and every Friendly office in your power ; but shou'd he pretend to come there for the Protection or defence of the French Fishers, or on any pretence whatsoever other than Distress, you are to signify to him that the Subjects of France, resorting to any part of his Britannick Majesty's Dominions, to follow Business or Trade by Virtue of Treaties Subsisting between the two Nations, are, whilst in His Majesty's Dominions, under the Protection of his Britannick Majesty only, and that in Conformity to his Majesty's Sentiments, and firm Resolution, of Maintaining with the Utmost exactness,

Probity, and good Faith the Treaties relating to the Fisherys, I shall, with an Unbiassed pursuit of the true Interest of both Nations, and Impartial Justice to the Subjects of both Crowns, in my Station, Inviolably observe his Majesty's Commands upon that Head; but that I cannot permitt any Officer, with a Commission from his Most Christian Majesty, and with an Armed Force, to resort to, or Exercise any Authority within, any part of his Majesty's Dominions under my Government, their doing so being directly contrary to the Words and Spirit of the 13th Article of the Treaty of Utrecht, By which the Sovereignty, property and full possession of this Country is Ceded to the Crown of Great Britain, and the French Expressly excluded, from having any Forts or Forces, in any part of it, and the Tenor of the whole of that Article is to provide against the French Encroaching on His Majesty's Territories, and on his Subjects, Rights and Privileges.

That therefore, I will not allow any Foreign Officers, with an Arm'd Force, to resort to this Country without first applying for, and Obtaining the King's Leave for that Purpose; In case you should meet with any such Officer, within the Limits of your Station, You are to appoint a reasonable time for him to depart, beyond which time you are not to allow him to stay, and for your Justification herein, You are to deliver him a Copy of this my Order to you.

GIVEN under my Hand, on Board His Majestys Ship *Antelope*, at Spithead this 1st of June 1769.

J. BYRON.

And again :—

WHEREAS I have received certain Information that the French Vessels from St Pierre's and Miquelon, fishing in the Gulph, do carry on a clandestine Trade, with our Canadian and New England Fishers for dried Fish, Furs and other Commodities, for which they are paid with French Goods and Manufactures. And that this illicit Trade is carried on mostly at and about the Magdalen Islands; by which means French Goods and other Articles the produce of France are introduced into all the Colonies, to the great Prejudice of British Manufactures: And as this pernicious Trade must be Prevented if possible, you are to Seize and send to me, all French Vessels, that you may meet

with within your Station, having on board Dry Fish, Furs or any Goods whatever, other than Wet Fish, Fishing Tackle, Salt and Provisions.

The following order from the Admiralty direct quotes the Acts of Parliament authorizing it. It certainly impresses on the mind the extraordinary folly and short-sightedness of the home Government, which had utterly failed to profit by the experience of the past three years. It will be observed that the Acts mentioned date from the reigns of Charles II and William III. :—

By the Commissioners for executing the
Office of Lord High Admiral of Great Britain
and Ireland, &c.

WHEREAS by the Act of navigation of the 12th Year of King Charles the 2^d, and by an Act of the 7th and 8th Years of King William the 3^d and other Acts of Parliament, it is provided that no Goods or Merchandizes whatsoever shall be imported into, or exported out of, any Colony or Plantation belonging to, or in the possession of, His Majesty in Asia, Africa, or America, or shall be laden in, or carried from, any one Port or place in the said Colonies or Plantations to any other Port or place in the same, in any Ship or bottom but what is of the built of Great Britain, or of the built of Ireland, or of the said Colonies or Plantations, and wholly owned by the people thereof, or any of them and navigated with the Masters and three-fourths of the Mariners of the said places only ; under pain of forfeiture of Ships and Goods ; And whereas, by an Act of the 15th Year of King Charles the Second and other Acts of Parliament, several regulations are made to prevent the importation of Goods into any of the British Colonies or Plantations from any part of Europe except from Great Britain,—and also to prevent the carrying Goods from any of the British Colonies or Plantations, to any part of Europe except Great Britain, under the penalty of confiscation of Ship and Cargo, subject to the exceptions therein contained, which, together with such other exceptions as have been made by subsequent Acts of Parliament, will be more particularly pointed out to you in the Instructions you will receive from the Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs ; You are hereby strictly required to

use your utmost endeavours to put the several Acts of Parliament abovementioned or referred to into execution within the limits of your Station, and to seize and proceed to condemnation of all such Ships and Vessels as you shall find offending against the said Laws.

And whereas you will receive a Deputation from the Commissioners of His Majesty's Customs empowering you to seize any Goods, Wares, or Merchandizes, prohibited to be exported out of, or imported into, any of His Majesty's Dominions, with Instructions for your better guidance and proceedings therein ; We do hereby further require and direct you to conform and pay the strictest regard thereto, and to exert your utmost diligence in the execution of the said Powers. Given under our hands the 23^d May, 1769.

J. BULLER
GEO. YONGE
PEIRCY BRETT

Cornwallis evidently did not understand the procedure of executing a "deputation from the Commissioners of Customs in America." Being a wise man he does not display his ignorance to the Admiralty, but writes direct to one of the permanent officials at the Treasury, who gave him the necessary information:

SIR,—

I am just honoured with your Letter of yesterday's date desiring to know in what manner you are to give security for duly executing a Deputation from the Commiss^s of Customs in America. In answer to which I am to acquaint you that the mode in which the Captains of His Majesty's Navy give such security is by Bond of £500 penalty, with two Sureties, which Sureties are to be Housekeepers. But if you are desirous that any of the Officers of your Ship should likewise receive Deputations, the Commissioners have agreed that the Captain & one of the said Officers may be bound for the other, if the Captain has no objection thereto. If therefore you or your Officers would wish to receive Deputations in America, & consequently to give security in manner above mentioned, I must entreat the favour of a Line by the return of the Post, informing me of the Names of the Sureties to be joined in your own Bond, & also their Titles &

places of abode : Likewise the Names of such of your Officers as would chuse to do the same ; Upon the receipt of which, I shall cause the proper Instruments to be immediately prepared, and transmitted to you to be executed.

I must further beg the favour of knowing the destination of your ship, my Instructions from the Comm^s being to give them immediate notice on receiving any such Bonds duly executed, in order that they may forward Deputations in consequence thereof, as expeditiously as possible, to such Place as your Ship may first arrive at.

I take the Liberty also of adding that the expence of £1. 8. 6. will be due for the Bonds from each person who shall enter into such security.

I have the honor to be, Sir, yours . . . etc.,

JOHN MARTIN LEAKE.

Other orders he received were to arrest summarily all foreign subjects found smuggling or “encroaching on Newfoundland,” to seize their ships and send them to St. John’s. Such prisoners were to be “victualled at two-thirds allowance of all species except beer.” Another curious order dealing with undesirable colonists reads :—

“In case the Justices and principal People at any Port within your District present to you any Persons that are useless to the Fishery, who entertain Rogues and Thieves and those that Live by Spoil and Plunder, and by entertaining the Fishermen and Seamen in Debaucheries, Idleness, Drunkenness and Licentiousness to the great Detriment of the Fishery, you are to seize on so much of the effects of such People to Pay for them and their families passage home, and to ship them to their respective homes accordingly, by a Vagrants’ Warrant signed by you certifying that their Passages are paid.”

Cornwallis did not remain long upon the coast of North America, as in January 1770 he is back at Plymouth, where his ship was being refitted and revictualled for service in the West Indies. The gaities of London evidently failed to attract him, as a letter from his sister, now Lady Mary Whitbread, shows :—

“Was you now in town you would be amazed at the excessive eagerness and anxiety of almost every body about the masquerade. Those who have been so fortunate as to have got tickets are

entirely engrossed in their thoughts and time, in making the preparations for their dress for this important entertainment, in endeavouring to excel each other in finery, for which purpose they borrow all the jewels and pearls they can of their friends, and those who have not been able to obtain tickets, or whose fathers will not consent to let them go, look so disconsolate that it would raise your compassion. The Bishop of London has endeavoured to prevent this entertainment taking place, in going to the King—to represent the perniciousness of allowing it. His Majesty said he did not approve of it; that this was quite a private thing, therefore he had not forbid it.”

During his stay at Plymouth some of the crew of the *Guadeloupe* deserted, but are pardoned by the Admiralty “On condition of their serving voluntarily.” As a six months’ cruise to the West Indies was preferable to a hundred or more lashes, one may assume they consented. Mention is made of this incident as two of the deserters had such extraordinary names. One was called Michael Costiken and the other Friend Florance.

In March of this year Cornwallis was ordered to proceed to Jamaica with dispatches for Commodore Forrest: where he arrived towards the end of April. Yellow fever must have been raging at the time, for during the seven months he was on the station he has correspondence with no fewer than five Commodores, of whom three died during the period—Forrest, Tonyn and Cartrell. In July of this year Cornwallis was instructed to put to sea with sealed orders. The task set him was interesting, and both tact and intelligence were necessary to ensure its being properly carried out. These are the orders given him by Tonyn:—

“You are hereby directed to proceed with his Majesty’s Ship under your Command to Port au Prince in the Island of Hispaniola, and deliver the Letter you receive with this order to the French Governor in Chief; but if, on your arrival there, you do not meet with him, then you’re immediately to proceed to Cape Nicolas Mole, and not finding his Excellency in that part of the Island repair from thence to Cape François, where you will cause the letter to be forwarded to him and after waiting a reasonable time for an answer, return to Portroyal in Jamaica.

“The principal design of sending you on this Service being to procure all the intelligence possible of the operations of the

French at Cape Nicolas Mole, what Fortifications have been erected lately, or are now carrying on there, likewise to obtain all the information you can of the situation of affairs in Hispaniola since the late Earthquake which has happened there : For these reasons should you meet the Governor at Port au Prince, when you shall have finished your business, then are you to proceed to Cape Nicolas Mole and form some plausible pretence for calling in there. It is needless to lay down any particular rules for your conduct on this occasion, your zeal for the honor of the Service will guide you through the execution of this order, with that Prudence and Circumspection so strongly recommended by the Right honorable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, in their printed Order and Instructions to Officers, relative to their making observations, &c., in Foreign Parts. You will endeavor to return to this Place about the twenty-fourth instant, and report to me, or the Senior Officer then present, an account of your proceedings."

In November of this year he visited Pensacola Harbour, when he had with him the sloop *Tryal*. He had some correspondence with Sir Frederick Haldimand [afterwards Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief in Canada, 1778-85], who requested him to convey a party of troops to Jamaica. Cornwallis writes agreeing, "As it wont be much out of the ship's course and His Majesty's Government will save money." But when he was asked to furnish three men to look after a cutter which had been hired by the military authorities, he replied to the effect that, apart from its being against the regulations to comply with the Governor's request, he had not three men on his sloop capable of looking after themselves, without the supervision of an officer, let alone a ship!

CHAPTER IV

1772-1776

CORNWALLIS remained in the West Indies the whole of 1771. He visited many ports in the Gulf of Mexico, but nothing of special interest occurred during this year. The only letter in existence from England was one from Captain J. Blankett, full of the gossip of the day, and giving him news of some of his brother-officers :—

1771, *December 15.* LONDON.

Now indeed that I am come to peep in London, I can write to you that Stott has been to Falkland Island and taken possession, has left it to take care of itself, and is returned unhurt to Plymouth. Mr. Banks is going on another expedition to the South Seas with two sloops, the *Drake* and *Rawleigh*; the first commanded by Cook (who is to be made Post), the other by a Mr. Furnace, who was formerly Lieutenant with Byron. [Cook was the famous Captain Cook.]

Cotton still continues idle in regard to our service and is entered into that of a wife (though he denies it), which probably may be attended with as many storms, hurricanes and tempests as any frigate in the West Indies. It is said the Ministry are angry at Mr. Rodney's making the seizure of the schooner a serious matter, and intend sending him some further instructions in regard to the Spaniards. The Princess Dowager still continues alive, but cannot last long; she has a cancer in her mouth and risings of the viscera, and is quite irrecoverable. As to minority, the extravagance and luxury of the times makes it necessary to be well with a minister, and their opposition will be very feeble; they possibly may try a question or two and dwindle to nothing. City patriotism has changed hands, and who has it now I cannot determine. Johnny [Wilkes] is most furiously attacked and badly

defended ; he loses ground daily, which he is sensible of. [John Wilkes the reformer, a Socialist a hundred years before his time.] The Duke of Cumberland, who has long diverted the town, is just arrived in Pall Mall with his Duchess ; they are forbid the Court, but that probably wont last long. As to the Turks and Russians, it is expected they will come to a peace this winter ; they are both much exhausted in men and money, and unless the Emperor of Germany interferences, will be glad to make peace on any terms. As to ourselves everything appears truly pacific ; the Ministry seem resolved not to quarrel, and the state of France will not yet suffer them to be troublesome.

Extravagance, luxury and gaming are the fashionable vices of the town, and it will astonish you on your return to see the vast improvements of the age. The Lotorie, Macaroni, White's, Almac's, &c., are in the most flourishing state, and cards in all companies are the only things worth living for. A man of taste must play all the morning, or, at least, four or five games before dinner, which is shortened to give time for the exquisite pleasures of "Quinze" and "Vingt-un." In fact idleness and debauchery are so far taken possession of all ranks in society, that opposition to the King's measures is a piece of barbarity inconsistent with the manners of the present age. All wit is at Court, all knowledge at the gaming table.

In June of the following year (1773) Cornwallis returned to England after an absence of three years. He was fortunate in not having suffered any ill-effects from his prolonged stay in that climate. Rodney had, in the meanwhile, taken over command of the West Indies station, and sent the *Guadaloupe* home with dispatches. After paying off his ship at Portsmouth in July, Cornwallis was for a time unemployed.

He was at this time Member of Parliament for the Eye Division of Suffolk, a pocket borough practically in the gift of his brother, but this fact did not in the least appeal to him ; indeed, it is very doubtful whether he ever took his seat, although he continued to represent the division until 1774. He himself was no politician, and was merely his elder brother's nominee. Politics offered no scope for his ambition, and he fretted over not being employed in his own profession. After a few months he became impatient and applied direct to Lord Sandwich, who was

then First Lord, expressing himself as “willing to serve in any part of the world where their Lordships might choose to send him.” Sandwich answers from Hinchinbrook on October 26th :

“Your conduct with regard to your profession in wishing for constant employment on a foreign station is highly laudable, and you may be assured I will attend to your wish as much as I can, consistently with what is due to other sea officers who have been a long time out of commission, and I am sure you will agree with me that justice requires they should have their share of the little employment there is to give in time of peace. I hope, therefore, you will not object to the remaining a reasonable time on shore, and you may depend upon it that I will make that time as short as I can with any degree of propriety.”

It was not until September of the following year that he was given command of the *Pallas*, a 32-gun frigate, which was fitting out at Portsmouth. With the sloop *Weazel*, also under his orders, he was again ordered to the West Indies, but this time by a longer route, as his instructions were to visit the ports of the West African colonies, “Call on the various garrisons and search for pirates.” He is warned not on any account to trade himself, “As complaints have been made that the Captains of H.M. ships have even transported great numbers of negroes in H.M. Ships to Barbadoes for public sale to the dishonour of H.M. service and to the prejudice of the Fair Trader.” He is also told “never to be 24 hours in any river, except the Gambia and Sierra Leone, nor to suffer men to lie on shore, or to drink Palm wine.” He is also given minute instructions what to do in case of his own death. A cheerful send off!

Just before sailing in November he received a quantity of what was then called “tincture of bark,” now known as “quinine.” It was probably “cinchona” bark: bitter, nauseous stuff from which quinine many years after was extracted. The instructions issued (incidentally the longest sentence one has ever read without a full-stop) for the administration of nasty medicine to seamen are amusing :—

“Whereas Tincture of Bark has been found by late experience, very effacious in preserving Men on the Coast of Africa from Fevers, and whereas it appears that several of the most eminent Physicians in Town, and also the Physicians of the Royal Hospitals at Portsmouth and Plymouth, having been consulted by the

Commissioners for taking care of Sick and Hurt Seamen upon the subject, have given it as their opinion that the most salutary effects may be hoped for from Bark being administered to men before they go on shore on the above-mentioned Coast, but that it will be better that the bark should be given in Substance as the virtue of it cannot by any other method be so fully preserved, and that the same should be administered morning and evening in the quantity of a drachm each time, to be mixed in half a Gill of Wine, and to give the like quantity of pure wine afterwards to each man to induce them the more readily to take that which is medicated, and which will also contribute to promote the success of the Bark."

The report the following year of the ship's Surgeon on the effects of the bark is also amusing. He does not seem to have thought much of it. It starts by saying he had to give twice the quantity of wine before the men would take it (considering what "cinchona" tastes like, this is certainly not surprising!)—and goes on to say: "Some it purged, some vomited, others it had no apparent effect on, many of them were afterwards attacked with fevers, there [sic. In these cases?] Bark was very usefull in protracting their lives. . . ." "There are few instances, if any, where the Bark is requisite when the subject is in perfect health, but on the decline of the ailment Bark and Wine are found to have a most salutary effect." He concludes by saying: "Very few of those who took the bark were afflicted with any bad consequences immediately."

Cornwallis must have had his tongue in his cheek when he sent this to the Admiralty!

He arrived at Jamaica in June 1775, and immediately sent off to the Admiralty a report of his voyage down the West African coast:—

SIR,—

I beg you will be pleased to acquaint their Lordships that I sailed from Senegal the 30th of Jan^{ry} after having spared Gov^r O'Hara Twenty five Half Barrels of Powder, and agreeable to their Lordships' Orders detach'd the *Weasel* to the Cape de Verd Islands; I arrived off the Mouth of the River Gambia the 2^d of Feb^{ry}. Upon sending an Officer up to James' Fort, I was inform'd by the Commanding Officer that the French had

spirited the Natives up against the English, and that he had been obliged to take a Schooner of some force belonging to the Traders into the Service in order to supply himself with water ; I thought the appearance of a Man of War might be of service, I therefore went up the River in the *Pallas* to James' Fort, which I found in great distress for want of Stores, and particularly Gun-Carriages, not having above three or four serviceable ones in the Fort, and most of their Guns rendered totally useless for want of them. Upon our coming up he discharg'd the Schooner, and I spared him Fifteen Half Barrels of Powder and what Stores we could ; there were two French Ships at Albreda, and a Schooner with a Pendant, and some Guns ; there were French Colours hoisted on shore, where they return'd a Salute to the Schooner. I staid in the River eight days, during which time we got the King of the Country on board and shew'd him all the Civility we could ; he seemed very well pleased, so I hope all will go on well again.

I then proceeded to Sierraleona, where I found a French Ship with a Pendant, the Master of which refused to haul it down for some time, pretending she was a Man of War, altho' full of Slaves ; she had been there ten months, had many Craft belonging to her, some of which had been sent away loaded ; I doubted their having any right to trade at this place, but as I had no Orders relative to the French I left them there.

I sailed from Sierraleona the 2^d of March, and proceeded down the Coast, visiting all the Forts either myself or sending one of the Lieutenants as far as Cape Coast, where I staid a Week. The Governor and Council seem'd desirous that I should go to Whydah, the Leewardmost Fort belonging to the Company upon the Coast, as a Man of War had not been there these Ten Years. I proceeded there accordingly, stopping and examining all the other Forts in my way.

I sailed from Whydah the 4th of April, and as it was late in the season, and meeting Southerly Winds before we crossed the Line, I did not go to St. Thomas', but stretch'd over for the West Indies, some of our Provisions being very near expended, particularly Bread, of which we were obliged to go to Half Allowance for some little time, notwithstanding we had stow'd a great deal between Decks when we left England, owing to the Smallness of the Bread room, I found it necessary in order to get a

Supply to carry us to Jamaica, to put into Barbadoes, where I arrived the 30th of May; we staid only four and twenty hours, and arrived here this Morning.

I am, Sir,

Yours . . . etc. . . .

W. CORNWALLIS.

He sends a further report, dated a few days later, informing the Admiral of his interview with Governor O'Hara [Charles O'Hara was the illegitimate son of Lord Tyrawley. He served in the 3rd Light Dragoons and in the Coldstream Guards. He distinguished himself in the American War of Independence and in the wars against the French, by whom he was taken prisoner and confined in Paris during the "Reign of Terror." He became a full General and was at one time Governor of Gibraltar] and how that official had requested him to leave the *Weazel* behind at Senegal as "he [O'Hara] informed me he had reason to suppose the French intended to encroach upon the gum trade at Portendic this year." Cornwallis, who had received specified instructions regarding the *Weazel*, declined to do so. The only letter of interest which he appears to have received from home at this time is another from his friend, Captain Blankett, written the previous December. He says :—

"The City is the only place left in the world that pretends to support liberty. Wilkes and Townsend are the patriotic candidates, and it is generally believed Wilkes will carry his point and be elected Lord Mayor. This will at least plague the Court, as he will allow as many common halls as they like to have. A reduction of 5,000 men is expected to take place amongst us very soon. . . .

"Promotion is now as distant as at the beginning of the Peace, the hackneyed word economy is used to stop the mouth of all applications."

This last sentence appears particularly applicable to the present times !

Cornwallis hardly had time to revictual his ship before he was ordered home again. He arrived at Spithead in October and was immediately ordered to sail again for the West Indies via the same route as his previous voyage.

On January 30th, 1776, he writes from Sierra Leone to the

Admiralty. The letter is interesting, as it shows the methods adopted by the American colonists to keep up their supplies of ammunition :—

I beg you will be pleased to acquaint their Lordships that, after having stop'd off Senegal and Gambia agreeable to their Orders, I proceeded to this place, where upon my arrival I was inform'd that several American Vessels belonging to the Rebellious Colonies had got up the different rivers upon this part of the Coast and were hiding there until we were gone, when they would come out and probably get supplied with Powder and Ammunition from the European Vessels. I sent Lieut. Bray in a Boat mann'd and arm'd to the Banana Islands about nine leagues from hence to seize a Schooner which I heard was there, but upon his arrival the person settled there informed him that some of her people had been found on shore arm'd among the Bushes endeavouring to take off some of his Negroes, but upon being discovered they got off and put to Sea, and Lieut. Bray could not follow her in an open boat. It was impossible for the *Pallas* to go up the Rivers after these Vessels if there had been time, and I have no Vessel of any kind with me, but the Officer whom I sent up to Bence Island inform'd me there was a Sloop call'd the *St. John* belonging to the proprietors of that Island which mounted eight four Pounders, and he thought would be of force sufficient to seize the Vessels up the Rivers and guard this part of the Coast. As their Lordships in their Orders to me mention'd a Suspicion of the Rebels in America being supplied with Powder and Ammunition from hence, I thought after the information I had received, and what happened upon my sending Lieut. Bray to the Banana's, I could not leave this part of the Coast entirely clear for them to carry on their plan, at the same time I am well aware that I have no Authority to Commission a Vessel, but as it might appear clearly to their Lordships that I could not execute this part of their Orders without it, the Exigence of the Service in time of actual Rebellion will I flatter myself plead an excuse for my doing what I was not sufficiently authorised to do. I have therefore taken this Vessel into the Service until their Lordships pleasure shall be known. . . . I am conscious that it must be an additional expence to Government, but I do not doubt it will appear to

their Lordships as necessary an Expence as any occasion'd by this Rebellion.

Mr. Agnew has just sent in a Schooner belonging to South Carolina which he seized coming out of Quia port River, and I intend taking her with me.

I have ordered Mr. Agnew to keep constantly cruising upon this part of the Coast, and to be particularly careful that no powder or ammunition is carried off that he may suspect to be going to the Americans and to seize and detain all Vessels belonging to the Colonies specified in my Orders from their Lordships, 'till the arrival of some of his Majesty's Ships or 'till farther Orders.

I am, Sir,

Yours . . . etc. etc.

W. CORNWALLIS.

CHAPTER V

1776

ALTHOUGH the American War of Independence had been waging since the previous year, there had been no attempt to place the British Navy on anything like a war footing. As Captain Blankett's second letter shows, economy was the order of the day. It was not until the following year, when France came in against us, that the Navy was mobilized, but in the meanwhile, events in America were being at last taken seriously by the British Government, and some addition was made to the strength of the Navy in American waters. The following letter from Captain Leveson-Gower deals with this point :—

“I shall send you enclosed a list of the ships for this summer's American service. It is likely much increased, and is increasing every week. About six weeks ago, Lord Howe was applied to and told that it was the King's wish that he should take on him the command of the ships in America ; this surprised everybody, as Shuldham had been so lately appointed, and it was certain his arrival there was not known by the Administration here. However, Lord George Germaine was now taken into great favour, and was to take the lead in the management of all this American war, for thus it surely may now be called. Lord Howe made many requisitions (his own word) ; the only one he has made public was that he should have his commission as Vice-Admiral ante-dated to that appointing Sir Hugh Palliser Lieutenant General of Marines, which we must suppose was granted, for his Lordship has actually accepted the command, though the *Eagle* (the ship he is to hoist his flag on board) is the only ship of the line under his orders ; the *Boyne* and *Somerset* being come back and reduced to guardships, and the *Asia* is expected soon. What makes this yet more extraordinary is that Lord Howe both hates and despises Lord Sandwich, and he has not spoke to Lord

George Germaine since the expedition to the coast of France in 1758, and these two men preside at the head of the two Offices through which he must transact all business. A friend of ours, says his Lordship, has much more faith in things than he shall ever be able to persuade himself, or any friend of his, to have. Lord Sandwich fought hard to support and keep Shuldham Commander in Chief; it would not do, but, by way of douceur, a patent is making out to create him Lord Shuldham of the kingdom of Ireland.

“I should have set out with telling you that upon the death of my very good and valuable friend, Sir Charles Saunders (even before he was cold), they appointed Sir Hugh Pallisser Lieutenant General of Marines, and he actually kissed hands the very next day. Sir Hugh should have shewn a more decent attention to his memory, considering the regard Sir Charles had always shewn towards him even in his will. As to Lord Sandwich, he never had any decency, and, shocking as it is, yet it is most true that he concealed the account of his son’s death two or three days that it might not stop the amusements and entertainments which he was then making at Hinchinbroke.”

Cornwallis was allowed no respite. American privateers were now active, and homeward-bound traders had to be convoyed. Advantage was taken of the arrival of the *Pallas* to send her back at the earliest opportunity in charge of 104 merchantmen. No light undertaking, as events proved. Cornwallis, as has been shown, had little love for the officers of the Merchant Service. He had every reason to have less at the conclusion of this voyage. He sailed together with H.M.S. *Maidstone* on August 6th, and on September 4th fell in with the *Greenville*, a fast-sailing packet on her way home, and took the opportunity of announcing to the Admiralty the date of his departure from Jamaica, and the names of vessels he was convoying. Two of these were curious, one was called *Judith Hilaria* and another *Lady’s Adventure*.

He met another homeward-bound ship on the 15th and wrote at greater length telling of the difficulties he had to contend with in attempting to keep his convoy together. After many vicissitudes, and incidentally recapturing a British ship which had been taken by an American privateer, he arrived at Spithead in November. Immediately on his arrival he learnt that many of the

convoy had reached home before him and that complaints against him for having improperly convoyed the fleet had been made by the West India merchants to the Admiralty. He at once wrote a full account of all that had happened, the following are extracts from this letter :—

“I hope their Lordships will be pleased to consider that it was totally impossible for the officers of a man-of-war to tell the names of all the merchant ships, particularly as there were not above eight or ten out of above a hundred sail that kept their stations or behaved tolerably well. During the time the *Maidstone* was in company I wrote to Captain Gardner to beg that he would oblige the ships in the rear to pay attention to my signals ; notwithstanding which, when we were off Cape Antonio, between twenty to thirty sail brought to to buy turtle, the *Maidstone* being at that time in chase. When she came up, the masters of the merchant ships acquainted Captain Gardner that their passengers were on shore purchasing turtle, and they could not make sail. This Captain Gardner informed me of before he parted company, and that many of them gave him impertinent answers when he hailed them, and that it was impossible for him to make them attend their duty. After we got through the Gulf and the *Maidstone* had parted company, in the evening it was squally, with thunder and lightning. We close-reefed our topsails, and they were lowered down, so that the worst sailing ship in the convoy might have kept her station, as the *Pallas* sailed very ill. We steered during the night the same course that we had done several hours before it was dark, with the wind aft. In the morning there were not above fifty sail to be counted from the masthead, and not above ten in their stations, the rest being an amazing distance to the eastward of us, and upon our starboard beam and bow ; upon which, as I had a great desire to preserve the convoy, I altered my course and steered after them, though I apprehend it to be the duty of the convoy to steer after the man-of-war, not she after the convoy. Many of the masters of the merchant ships acquainted the officers of the *Pallas* that they thought it entirely owing to our steering so much to the eastward after those ships that we met with the calms which occasioned the long passage. From this time to the 24th September, the weather was such that any ship might have kept company that chose ; that morning there were only nineteen sail in company ; during

the day it blew very hard, and we brought to under a reefed mainsail; the next morning there were only six sail in sight, which joined us. The *Suffolk* parted company the 27th by request; the *Anne*, *Northside Planter*, *Hereford* and *London* hoisted their colours in the morning of the 30th and parted company till the evening, when we retook the *Anne*; she then hailed us and desired to part company. I told them we had just retaken a ship, and that there were a number of American privateers about, upon which he said he would keep company; but left us in the night."

Cornwallis became annoyed at receiving no answer, and on December 1st wrote again to the Admiralty:—

SIR,—

I wrote the 23^d of last month wherein after answering some parts of the Declaration of the Masters of the Ships transmitted to their Lordships by the Jamaica Merchants, I concluded with desiring that if their Lordships were not satisfied with my Conduct they would be pleased to order it to be enquired into.

It is natural to suppose that after having been above a Twelve Month abroad, and the Ship arrived in port, I should have some little business in Town; my remaining here so long after the Ship's arrival in harbor must of course make the Sea Officers at this place suppose that I have been guilty of some Crime, and as I am not conscious since I first came into the Navy of having any one point in view but that of strictly attending to the Service I was employed upon to the best of my Judgement, I beg the favor that you will be pleased to represent my situation to their Lordships whether it is not hard that I should be kept here like a Prisoner for the pleasure of the West India Merchants, whose pique against me may probably proceed only from my chusing that the Ship I command should be a Man of War, and who I am informed have publickly declared upon 'Change that though they do not expect to bring anything material against me, that this kind of treatment to a Captain of a Man of War will do good.

I am, Sir,

Yours . . . etc. . . .

W. CORNWALLIS.

To this he received a reply to the effect that—

“Their Lordships are given to understand that the West India Merchants will attend them on Friday next; and make the request in form that an enquiry be made into his conduct,” and enclosing a copy of the letter written to the Admiralty by the Chairman of the West India Committee. [This gentleman was Mr. Beeston Long, father of the 1st Lord Farnborough.]

Cornwallis answers this :—

SIR,—

I have been favored with your letter enclosing a Copy of a letter from the Chairman of the Committee of Merchants; In answer to which I beg leave to observe that the Officers of the *Pallas* whom I sent on board some of the Merchant Ships to enquire into the State of their Water and Provisions had no Order from me to acquaint them that we were absolutely going into Port, and I am pretty well convinced that the Officers never told them any such thing, if the Masters from any conversation with the Officers thought they had no alternative but to accompany the *Pallas* into Port or proceed alone it is strange that they should not have come to me to enquire, and that the Ships that were not sent to should be the first to leave the Convoy, and I cannot conceive how they can pretend to call it the unhappy 18th of Sept^r, when in the morning of that day seeing near half the Ships steering a different course I made the Signal for the Convoy to come into our Wake which they paid no attention to, this I believe will appear by my Journal, by which I believe it will also appear I took as much care of the Ships that staid with me after the 18th of Septem^r as I had done at any time before. In regard to the Water, all our Casks were full, and we compleated it at Bluefields, the Master reported as much water as he could stow. We served no more to both Officers and Men than we thought absolutely necessary considering the extreme heat of the Weather, and we had no alteration of Climate until after the Gale of Wind the 24th of Sept^r, which separated all but six Sail of the Convoy.

This satisfied the West India merchants, as the Admiralty write that his letter had been read to them and that they did not press for further inquiry. After having spent a very unpleasant

fortnight, Cornwallis was given ten days' leave. Upon his return to his ship, he was asked by the Admiralty to explain his conduct upon two different occasions, both of which had become the subject of diplomatic correspondence, although the events referred to had happened many months before. The first deals with the complaint of the Spanish Ambassador. The correspondence is given in full :—

SIR,—

I have received your letter of the 20th instant acquainting me that Lord Weymouth had transmitted to their Lordships a Complaint of the Spanish Ambassador of my Conduct towards some Ships which were at the Canary Islands ; in answer to which I beg you will be pleased to acquaint their Lordships that when I was at Teneriffe in January 1775, an English Merchant Ship named the *Fly* was coming into Port with a Pendant hoisted, and as she did not haul it down when she came within Gun shot of the *Pallas*, I fired at her ; Two or three days afterwards an English Sloop was under Sail going out with a Pendant, and obliged me to fire five or six shot before she would haul it down, the Shot were fired to the sea, no Complaint was ever made to me from the Spanish Governor relative to this matter.

Upon my Arrival there in December 1775, I sent an Officer on board the different English Vessels in the Port, as I looked upon it to be my duty ; the Officer that went had no Orders to search, and declared to me he only enquired the particulars where they came from, where they were bound and whether there were any English Seamen on board that would enter into his Majesty's Service. I thought I had much more reason to complain of their harbouring five Deserters from his Majesty's Sloops *Atalanta* and *Weazle*, who were encouraged to be insolent to our Officers whenever they landed. I have enclosed Copies of the Letters that passed between the Governor and me upon the Subject.

I am, Sir, yours . . . etc. . . .

W. CORNWALLIS.

SIR,—

I understand there are two Seamen and three Marines who were left behind from two English Men of War that were

lately here harboured and protected by the Spaniards on shore at this place. As they are Subjects of the King of Great Britain and in his Service, I am to request that you will be pleased to order them to be delivered up to the Officer who carries this.

I am, Sir,

Your most Obedient humble Servant,

W. CORNWALLIS.

DON MATHIAS FRANCO
DE CASTILLO.

(a copy
W. CORNWALLIS.

The Commanding Officer at Santa Cruz, instead of answering himself, sent the letter to the Spanish Governor-General, who, in true Castilian style, answers Cornwallis in the third person.

“The Marquis of Tavalosos, Governor General of these Islands, is very sorry to see repeated by The Hon^{ble} William Cornwallis, Captain of a British Frigate of War, the same hostilities another Captain before him did commit (considered at time as proceeding from Inadvertency) and can no longer overlook that an Officer of War of Great Britain should not respect the privilege of Asylum reciprocally afforded to all Nations in time of peace in all his Catholick Majesty’s Ports, and is under the Necessity to tell that he cannot see with indifference an act of Authority and Jurisdiction which the Honorable William Cornwallis has taken on himself by searching and examining in the port of Santa Cruz a Vessel of his own Nation while at Anchor in the Port, and under the protection of his Catholick Majesty my Master, such an Act of Hostility being protested against as contrary to the peace and Tranquillity the two Courts of London and Madrid are in, that if he does not refrain from the like proceedings, he will be under the hard necessity of supporting by the Cannon the respect and decorum due to the dominions of the Catholick King; and that the Marquis of Tavalosos will attend to any representations the Captains of any of the Ships of War of Great Britain should make him in service of their Sovereign, and hopes the Honorable Captain William Cornwallis will find it so, he salutes him and is ready to serve him in whatsoever should offer.”

To this Cornwallis replies :—

SIR,—

I wrote yesterday to the Commanding Officer at Santa Cruz relative to two Seamen and three Marines who were left behind from two English Men of War that were lately here, harboured and protected by the Spaniards on shore at this place, and as they are Subjects of the King of Great Britain and in his Service, I requested that he would be pleased to order them to be delivered up ; instead of a compliance he this day sent me off a paper said to come from your Excellency complaining of my having examined an English Vessel in the Road, and in the conclusion threatening to make use of the Cannon in case of a repetition. In answer thereto I am to acquaint you English Men of War are sent to different parts of the World for the protection of the Trade of his Britannick Majesty's Subjects, and that it is the duty of a Captain of a Man of War to send on board all English Vessels wherever he meets them ; I think I had greater reason to threaten to make use of the Cannon of his Britannick Majesty's Ship under my Command in case of the Men's not being delivered up, than your Excellency had upon account of my sending on board the English Vessel.

I am, Sir,

Your most Obedient humble Servant,

W. CORNWALLIS.

MARQUIS OF TAVALOSOS.

There is nothing to tell whether the men were delivered up or not, but his worst enemy could not have suggested that Cornwallis did not do his best to uphold the dignity of the British flag. Here is the other instance :—

SIR,—

I have received your letter with that of Complaint from the Dutch Envoy to the Earl of Suffolk relative to what passed when I was at Cormantyne upon the Coast of Africa in March last.

I beg leave to observe that upon my arrival at Cape Coast I was informed by the Governor and Council of the Depredations made by the Dutch Subjects (for it must be observed that all the

Negroes settled under the protection of the English and Dutch Forts are admitted to be Subjects of the different Nations, and they are answerable for their conduct, the same as if they were white people born in Europe), therefore after taking the depositions and being thoroughly satisfied of the truth of every particular, at the request of the Governor and Council I wrote to the Director General at Elmina and beg'd he would give Mr. Bold, the Master and Owner of the Ship *Sophia*, whose Boat had been plundered, redress, acquainting him that I should stop off Cormantyne in three or four days to see it performed, to which he answered that he would order the matter to be enquired into, and if he found it as stated would order satisfaction, but altho' I waited near a fortnight I never received any answer from the Director General, and when I sent an Officer on shore to Cormantyne they informed me that he had never sent to them upon the Subject. I own I thought this rather trifling with a Man of War, and determined to fire upon the Negroe Town, which stood near the end of the Fort, but I gave particular orders to take care not to hurt the Fort, the Governor of which informed me that he had sent to Elmina, and beg'd I would desist until an answer came which I immediately agreed to. Deputies were afterwards sent on board from Elmina by the Director General, and the matter was settled with great civility on both sides ; the Deputies themselves sending to the Fort desiring them to salute, which we return'd with four Guns less, the same as we always did to the English Forts which are not Commanded by King's Officers, consequently to be looked upon in the same light as a Merchant Ship.

The Officer I sent to Cormantyne can testify that I never threatned to fire at the Fort, much more to knock it down. Firing at the Negroe Towns on these occasions hath been customary ; it was done by Captain Cleveland at the same place in the year 1763. I was the more inclined to credit the Testimony of one of the witnesses as he had quarrelled with Mr. Bold, his Master, and came to me for protection, and he declared upon Oath that if the Dutch Negroes had not boarded the Boat she would not have gone on shore, The English people on board the boat being beat, stript, and obliged to jump overboard.

I am, Sir, yours . . . etc. . . .

W. CORNWALLIS.

On both these documents the official minute is to the effect they are to be sent to the Earl of Suffolk for His Majesty's information. Whether George III ever set eyes on them one cannot say, but nothing further was written by the Admiralty to Cornwallis on either matter. Possibly his fire-eating propensities caused him to go up in their Lordships' estimation.

SECOND PHASE

1777—1789

FROM POST-CAPTAIN TO COMMODORE
AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE AND
WAR WITH FRANCE AND SPAIN

CHAPTER I

1777

It may be said that Cornwallis started the second phase of his career in 1777. Hitherto his experience of Active service had been in a subordinate position, but now it was different. As a young Post-Captain in time of peace he had displayed many of the qualities necessary to further him in his profession. But the opportunities which were now to offer themselves were of a more serious kind, and called for a display of the sterner traits in his character if they were to be taken the fullest advantage of.

The dispute with the North American Colonists had come to be recognized at last as a serious war ; and no longer merely a rebellion of untrained farmers, assisted by a few French patriots, which would and could be suppressed by a handful of regular troops. The following year France came in on the side of the Americans, and the British Navy was called upon to take upon itself the greater share of the fighting between the two countries. Cornwallis was in the thick of it for the whole of the five years the war lasted. There is little doubt that his behaviour throughout these years fixed itself upon the minds of the Authorities at home, and caused him to be recognized as one of the most promising officers in H.M. Navy. Personal influence had undoubtedly assisted him at the start, but it was no longer necessary, and from now on, until his final retirement, his various appointments were justified by his own merit.

Just before the New Year he had been given command of the *Isis*, a new ship of 50 guns. He had hardly gone on board her when he was asked by the Commissioners of the Navy Office to explain certain expenditure he had incurred the previous year when on the West Coast of Africa, and to which they had taken exception. His answer is given not because it is important, but

because it is so typical of what one may be permitted to call the polite bluntness of the man.

GENT^l,—

I have received your letter dated 30th of Last Month objecting to the expence of Stores supplied to the *Mary* American Schooner by His Majesty's Ship *Pallas* late under my command.

I beg leave to acquaint you that I was ordered by the Admiralty last year to seize all Vessels belonging to the Colonies that were in Rebellion to prevent their carrying Powder & Arms to America, taking all such Vessels with me to Jamaica, Where I was to deliver them up to the Adm^l they were not at that time Looked upon in the Light of Prizes, The *Mary* was absolutely in Want of these Stores to enable her to proceed with me down the Coast & to Jamaica. There was none to be purchased upon the Coast of Africa, indeed if there had, I do not see that it was my business to put myself to any expence in executing my Orders, which if they had not been for the good of the King's service I should not have received. I am sure it could be of no service to me as the Vessel would not have paid her Condemnation if she had arived safe at Port Royal, but she was very capable of carrying Arms and Powder to the Rebels.

Tho' this expence may not be according to rule, I flatter myself the board will see the Necessity of it. I did not chuse to expend the Stores in any other way, as I wish allway to stick as much to truth as possible on these Occasions.

I am, Gent^s, yours . . . etc. . .

W. CORNWALLIS.

Cornwallis remained at Portsmouth the first three months of the year while his ship was being fitted out. The *Isis* sailed on April 2nd as convoy to a fleet of transports conveying reinforcements to Sir William Howe's army in America. To assist him, Cornwallis was given three sloops, the *Camel*, *Swift* and *Bute*. He had a rough voyage, as after sixteen days at sea a Board of Survey condemned and threw overboard "850 lbs of cheese, 180 lbs flour and 18 bushels of pease" which were found to be "rotten, stinking and not fit to be eat, occasioned by their having been wet with a Sea Shipt in the Night of the 14th inst in a hard gale of wind."

The convoy arrived safely in New York harbour towards the middle of May. The first instruction Cornwallis received from Lord Howe, the Commander-in-Chief, was to circularize the following general, but what proved to be unduly optimistic, order :—

MEMO.

April the 30th, 1777.

The Commander in Chief is authorised to signify to the Officers & Seamen of the Ships of War, & Transports concerned, the entire Approbation declared by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty of their spirited behaviour reported in the several conjunct Operations during the Course of the last Campaign, which turminated so much to the benefit of the King's Service, & the reputation of His Maj^s Arms—Their Lordships not doubting but that same laudable Zeal & Resolution will be testify'd by them on every future Occasion which may result from the Continuance of the unnatural Rebellion, for the short time it may now be expected to subsist in these Colonies.

Howe also, by a general order to his Captains, negatived the instructions he had received from home to send all "Rebel vessels seized as prizes direct to Europe." He pointed out that such a course would denude H.M. ships of their crews, and therefore he ordered that all such prizes were to be sent to such American ports as were at that time in the hands of the English. Even this course had the effect of taking men away from their own ships, so a further order on the subject is issued. The first part instructs Captains of H.M. ships to destroy vessels of small value, sooner than risk their ships by denuding them of part of their crews. It goes on to point out that the crews of vessels taken as prizes and belonging to American Colonists are, though rebels, still British subjects and as such are liable to be impressed as seamen for H.M. Navy, but the Admiral emphasizes an important point : "It is nevertheless to be remembered that any confidence put in men so acquired is likely to be productive of great disappointments."

Before giving an account of Cornwallis's share in the undertaking, which led eventually to the British gaining access to Philadelphia by sea, it may be as well to say briefly how it was

intended to employ the expeditionary force under General Sir William Howe. Its primary object was to take that city. It was hoped that by an attack up the Delaware river, Washington would not only be obliged to surrender his capital, but that he and his army would be in such a precarious situation that a British victory would be decisive and speedily terminate the rebellion.

On July 23rd of this year the whole fleet and transports sailed from Sandy Hook. It took a week to get to the mouth of the Delaware. But the river itself had been effectually blocked and all attempts to get up it failed. It was decided, therefore, to proceed south and sail up Chesapeake Bay and attempt a landing in that part of Maryland which borders on Pennsylvania, and is no great distance from Philadelphia.

The whole fleet safely navigated the intricacies of the bay, and after one month's journey from Sandy Hook eventually anchored off the mouth of the Elk river. Here, on August 25th, the army landed. It is a matter of history how Philadelphia capitulated, after the battle of Brandywine, and how Washington, nothing daunted, retired with his army some twenty miles from the city.

Cornwallis was for a short time given the unenviable task of convoying transports and store-ships up and down Chesapeake Bay, one of the most difficult pieces of navigation on the Atlantic seaboard. The *Isis* then appears, judging by the following order, to have also been used as a sort of floating fort :—

“ You are hereby required to proceed with his Majesty's Ship under your Command to the upper Part of Lynn Haven Bay, as near to the East side of the Pass between the Horse shoe shoal & the Shoal off Willoughby's Point, as the Pilot can place the Ship with Safety for the Purpose of Blocking up the James River Channel ; But attention must be paid in the taking this Station, that you may be in such a Situation as to be enabled to give assistance to the Frigate placed upon the Tail of the Horse Shoe shoal, and to protect any transports or other Ships that may arrive in the Bay untill it is in your Power to forward them to me, which you are always to do as soon as Possible after their Arrival. . . .”

This order was issued by Captain Hyde Parker [afterwards Admiral and Nelson's chief at Copenhagen]. He was Acting Commodore in the absence of Lord Howe, who had returned to

the mouth of the Delaware. On September 13th Howe sent for Cornwallis to join him. It had been decided to attempt to force the passage of the Delaware river as, although Philadelphia was taken, access to it by sea was as yet impracticable.

At a place called Mud Island, where the Schuylkill river flows into the Delaware, strong batteries had been erected; opposite to it, on the Jersey shore, another fort called Red Bank had also been built. In the channel between these two points immense beams crossing each other, and studded with iron spikes, had been sunk. These were called "chevaux de frize" [modern spelling "frise"]. The spikes were enormously strong and so designed as to hold a ship fast should she strike them. Similar contrivances, defended by redoubts, armed galleys and two floating batteries, had been sunk at a place called Billing's Point some miles lower down on the Jersey shore. The task of clearing away these obstacles was assigned to the *Augusta*, *Roebuck*, *Isis*, *Merlin*, *Vigilant*, and one or two armed galleys. Lord Howe himself flew his flag on board the *Eagle* off Chester, near the mouth of the river; it was not far from Billing's Point, in fact, on several occasions he sent and received answers from Cornwallis the same day. He was, therefore, able practically to superintend all operations himself.

The reduction of the fort at Billing's Point proved an easy matter, as the enemy evacuated it on the first sign of it being attacked by a force under Colonel Sterling. They spiked the guns and set fire to the buildings. Before doing so they made the place untenable by opening some small tidal flood-gates and letting the sea in. The obstruction at this point having been removed, it was decided to attempt to reduce the forts higher up the river at Red Bank and Mud Island by a combined land and water operation. The former was entrusted to Colonel Donop and a Hessian Regiment. It failed totally. The attempt by sea was equally unsuccessful. The *Augusta* and *Merlin* both ran aground, owing, it was said, to the bed of the channel having become altered by the action of the current on the "chevaux de frize" a few hundred yards higher up.

The comparatively shallow draft of the *Isis* and *Roebuck* had enabled them to go above the obstruction on a flood-tide. The log of the *Isis*, October 23rd, describing the action, reads: "At 5 p.m. observed the *Augusta* and *Merlin* aground, a fire

began between our ships and the Rebel vessels and fort. . . . *Augusta* made signal for Pinnaces and Barges mann'd and armed. 3 fire ships came down but were towed off by the boats . . . *Augusta* took fire abaft. 6 p.m. Engaged in warping through Chevaux de Frieze. The boats took the people out of the *Merlin* and set her on fire. 7 p.m. The *Augusta* blew up. . . . The ebb tide set us on the back of one of the Chevaux de Friezes. . . . At 9-o'clock the *Merlin* blew up. The *Vigilant* also went aground."

That same evening Cornwallis received the following from Howe :—

Oct 23rd, 1777, "EAGLE."

SIR,—

The Command of the Ships off Billing's Port by the unfortunate accident to the *Augusta* devolving on you, Your attention will be requisite for preventing as much as may be the Effect of any attack attempted to be made on the *Vigilant* in the situation where she now is placed. She will be to move forward through the Channel to the W^tward of Hog Island, or back to her former Station off Tinicumb Island, where she may lye afloat at all times of the tide, in readiness however to proceed up against the Port as circumstances may induce; and of which Captain Henry will be duly informed.

It may be soon Expedient to drop the Ships below the Chevaux de frieze, But that measure should be posponed of the two Frigates at least untill the *Vigilant* has quitted her present Station.

Two Anchors & two Cables nearest the Establishment of that Ship will be got ready & sent up with all possible dispatch for the *Roebuck*, Having only One Bower left, she should fall down below the Chevaux de friezes, tho' it is desireable that the Opportunity should be taken for that purpose after the Close of the Day.

The *Camilla* & the *Cornwallis* (Galley) if the last is not necessary for strengthening the advanced Guard of the Ships, would I think be better in the W^tern Channel to prevent insults to the other Ships with you from that side.

Care should be taken of the Booms of the *Augusta* or any of the other Ships which have been temporarily secured on Tinnicomb Island, they may be Employ'd in the meantime as a fence

before the advanced Ship, but they should ultimately be preserved for further rise.

The *Vigilant*, in the meanwhile, had been got off. Cornwallis replies the following day :—

MY LORD,—

I had the honour of your Lordship's Letter last night, the *Vigilant* is moved back to where she was before, & Captain Henry informs me, he is to remain untill the Wind is fair for him to move forward.

We have moved up a little higher with the Ships as I thought it probable the Enemy might attempt to get up the Guns out of the wrecks which we can effectually prevent in our present position, the *Roebuck* is now well supply'd with Anchors & Cables ; so that I apprehend your Lordship would not chuse to have her move below the Chevaux de frizes, the *Augusta's* booms are I believe perfectly secure as they are upon the Island nearly abreast of the *Camilla*, the Rebel Galleys are close up under Red bank & have not moved all this day.

He writes to the Admiral again the next day :—

“Upon receiving your Lordships Command from Captⁿ Hammond, the *Roebuck* & *Isis*, dropt below the Chevaux de frize Yesterday Evening, the *Liverpool* & *Pearl* remain'd as high up as your Lordship saw them Yesterday, but it being foggy this Morning & hearing a firing from those Ships, I sent the Boats to their Assistance and directed them to fall down so as to remain just above the Chevaux de frize, which I understand from Captⁿ Hammond to be your Lordship's intentions. The Rebels here had many men upon the wrecks this Evening but from the Size of their Boats I do not apprehend, they have got anything of Consequence out of them, the *Liverpool* is endeavouring to remove some more of the Chevaux de frize.

“The Marines Captⁿ Owen required from the Ships here are ready on board the *Isis* & *Roebuck* ; every assistance will be given that the Commanding Officer can wish for.”

CHAPTER II

1777

IN spite of this failure a fresh attempt was immediately decided upon. The new plan was to fortify a small island in mid-channel above the obstruction, which would command Mud Island. It was a daring experiment, as it was under long-range fire from the Rebels, and the success of the undertaking depended upon being able to mount guns of heavier calibre than those of the enemy. It was decided to occupy the old fort at Billing's Point to prevent it again falling into the hands of the enemy, and with a view to the salvage of the cannon lately abandoned, which were of heavy calibre. No time was lost, and on the 25th Howe writes a letter to Cornwallis, which evidently crossed his of the same date :—

“ I am favoured with your letter in answer to my last containing your sentiments upon the Matters recommended to your consideration.

“ Being much pressed in time yesterday I would not wait to have the pleasure of seeing you ; and therefore desired Captain Hammond to mention my wishes about the position of the Ships, and trial to be made for widening the Channel through the lower Chevaux de frize.

“ A Detachment of 200 Men from the 71st Regiment has been ordered here for occupying a Post at Billing's port, they will proceed up the River tomorrow with the Addition of the Marines which can be furnished from the Ships here for enabling them to establish themselves in the Manner judged Expedient.

“ You will please to afford them such assistance as you can render from the Ships, for the purpose of their appointment as the Commander of the Party for the time being may request, & such farther addition of Marines from the *Roebuck* and *Isis* as may compleat their force to about 350 men.

“ It is proposed to re-embark a part or whole of the Marines when the Post is made tenable for the troops which are to remain in it.

“ The time for landing this Corps and re-embarking the whole, or any part, is to depend upon the application of the Commanding Officer.

“ Transports will be Ordered up for the Detachment of the 71st: And the Marines may be taken for the time into the *Isis* and *Roebuck*.”

Having carried out his orders, Cornwallis writes on the 26th :

“ The Detachment of Marines & 71st Regiment have taken Post at Billingsport, we therefore judged that Place being now secure, that we might drop up above the Chevaux de frizes as it would effectually prevent the Rebels getting any thing out of the wrecks and we shall lay full as convenient for assisting our people on Shore, the *Isis* has moved up & the *Roebuck* means to follow.”

Howe approves, and writes that same evening :—

“ I very much approve the Conduct you have pursued in passing the Chevaux de frize after having seen the Detachment posted at Billingsport, more Especially as you will in that situation be able to give greater security to the return of the Boats which I expect back this Night from the delivery of a lading of Provisions in the Schykill.

“ Being in doubt whether the Detachment would be able to establish itself so soon, I postponed mentioning my Wishes to that Effect—But as I judged the Detachment would have been better sustained by continuing the *Roebuck* on this side the Chevaux de frize, I should have recommended that arrangement to your Consideration—you will nevertheless determine therein as upon further reflection appears most fit.”

On the 27th Cornwallis again writes :—

“ The *Liverpool* swept one of the Prongs of the Chevaux de frize Yesterday morning, but could not make a trial for want of good hawsers ; we could not spare ours as we were warping thro'. The Weather is too bad to-day, but a trial will be made as soon as possible, the success of which I will lose no time in informing your lordship of. I gave particular directions to Capt^a Linzee, who is the advanced Ship, & sent an Officer last night to be careful in Protecting as much as possible the return of the Boats,

which your Lordship did me the honor to mention in your letter ; last night they saw nothing of the Boats, but Captⁿ Linzee informs me five rebel Gallies moved over to Mud Island Yesterday in the Evening, & returned again this Morning, probably this movement was with a view to intercept any boats that might attempt to pass which I thought Proper your lordship should be informed of.”

The fort at Billingsport was found to be untenable owing to the water, and the troops landed on the 26th had nothing with which to cut drains to let it out ; consequently they were brought back on board the ships. Tools having been provided, Cornwallis writes on the 31st :—

“ Captain Owen took post at Billingsport this morning at the time appointed and they are now busy going on with their works, and making drains, which will I hope prevent their being incommoded by the rain in future. The *Liverpool* tried yesterday to overset the Chevaux de frizes, but without success, having broke an eight and Nine Inch Hawser ; she is now to make a trial with a Bower, The success of which I shall inform your Lordship.”

Howe was evidently annoyed at Captain Owen, who was in command of the detachment of the 71st Regiment, for not having stuck it out in the mud and water, for he writes to Cornwallis :—

“ I have been favoured with your letter by Captⁿ Reeves of yesterday’s date.

“ I was more particular about the Cannon in my former letters, in a precautionary view. Captⁿ Owen & Captⁿ Frazier, who both writ to state the inconvenience of their situation alike Omitted to suggest the Species of Relief or Assistance it required, & which their local knowledge gave room to expect.

“ A mere intimation of the disadvantage sustained in Military services affords no ground for forming an Opinion of the particular Instructions necessary to be given in the Case.

“ The Precautions which were taken for security of the Cannon, were all that could be wished.

“ The weather being now so favourable I hope no farther impediment will intervene to retard the Establishment of the Post.”

The British were not allowed to have matters all their own way. The enemy still had their armed galleys and floating batteries, and used them, as Cornwallis writes :—

“ The Floating Battery’s & Gallies are moved close under

Redbank, I apprehend with a view to assist in its Defence. If your Lordship pleases I will drop up a little to divert them."

To this suggestion Howe answers at length :—

"Your laudable Ardor will soon I hope have a more ample field for the display of its urgency, than the late movement of the Gallies & floating Battery's will yet afford.

"I do not conjecture for what reason they have changed their Position, unless to be in readiness for any design they suspect is carrying on against Mud Island.

"A multitude of untoward incidents have lately intervened to retard our preparations for the next measure proposed. In the meantime I wish every such Idea to be untalked of and am assured of your discretion upon the Point.

"Having explained myself so far I must leave you at liberty *to divert* the Enemy's attention as Circumstances may require, but I do not foresee that any advantage will be derived by drawing their fire upon the Ships if that is your view. And whilst it can be so conveniently done, think it should be avoided.

"It may be eligible to drop a buoy or two the preceeding night, to direct the placing of the Ships, when their service is required against Mud Island, and for engaging the attention of the force at Red bank : and for the same reason we should give as little suspicion as possible, that we then propose advancing the boats for such purpose ; & not prematurely send them forward in any way that may put the Enemy more upon their Guard."

Whether Cornwallis proceeded to attempt to "divert the enemy" one cannot say, but the position of his ship was evidently thought by some of his brother-officers to be dangerous, for on November 3rd he receives the following from Captain Hamond [Andrew Hamond, afterwards Sir Andrew] :—

"I write from on board the *Somerset* by Captain Ourry's desire. A Rebel Officer just now came in, by way of Billingsport, to read his recantation. He seems intelligent & perfectly acquainted with all transactions of the Rebels, & hopes to make his peace with the General & his Father (whose name is Barblet & lives in Philadelphia) by giving intelligence that may be serviceable. He says that Cap^t Lee, who brought the Guns down against the ships the day before yesterday, intends to bring down 2 twenty Pounders tonight nearer to the Point, & to open his Battery in the morning with Hot Shot. Capⁿ Ourry is desirous

you should be acquainted with this circumstance & thinks it would be right to drop a little lower down : even if you was to move up again tomorrow upon seeing the intelligence had no foundation.”

This officer also acquainted him the next day that Captain Owen had captured “Captain Pauls the rebel Militia man, also a reconnoitring party with two rebel officers from the garrison at Red Bank.” On November 6th Howe writes to Cornwallis :—

“Not Observing that you had Occasion to return the fire from the Gallies Yesterday evening I hope the Distance they kept from you has prevented your receiving any material Injury.

“Every means must be used to maintain the command of the channel between Billingsport & Hog Island upon which the Communication at present with the Army depends. This I flatter myself you will be able to do in your present Station as the Ships may approach very near the Shores between Manto Creek & Billingsport.”

To which he replies on the same day :—

“I received the honor of your Lordship’s letter, the Gallies kept at a considerable distance yesterday evening, I did not mean to fire at them whilst they were advancing, as I wished to draw them as near to us as possible, & we kept the men close down, by which measure no one was hurt ; the *Isis* received a little or no damage, either from the Galley or Guns on Shore ; One of our Coppers is rendered useless, & I am afraid cannot easily be repaired ; I have no doubt of maintaining the Station we are in, we have seen nothing of the Rebels today, I believe they are gone and have taken their Guns with them.”

On November 15th and 16th another attempt to reduce Mud Island Fort was made by the *Isis* and *Somerset* in conjunction with some other smaller ships and the newly erected battery on the island in mid-stream. This attack succeeded. The garrison offered a stubborn resistance, but were so pounded that they evacuated their position during the second night. On the following day Cornwallis received the congratulations of the Admiral.

“I am to acknowledge the highly approveable Conduct testified in the whole of your Proceedings yesterday ; And I am to request you will return my particular thanks to the Officers and Company of the *Isis*, who appeared to have so well seconded your Intentions on that Occasion.”

According to the log of the *Isis* that ship was much damaged, but she does not appear to have had many casualties. Sir William Howe also testified his warm approval of the assistance the Navy had given to the Army in the following letter, dated November 17th, to Lord Howe, who caused it to be read to all the ships' companies :—

“EAGLE,” DELAWARE, *Nov^r 18th, 1777.*

PUBLIC ORDERS.

The Admiral having received a letter from Sir W^m Howe, expressing his sense of the late meritorious services of the Officers & Seamen of the Fleet ; He judges the General's sentiments will be most acceptably communicated, by giving the annexed Copy of his Letter which, with the Admiral's Opinion, on the Subject of it, is desired to be made publick in the different Ships.

PHILADELPHIA, 17 *Nov^r, 1777.*

MY LORD,—

I cannot too highly acknowledge the Signal services, the Army has received from the Perseverance, & Activity of the Officers, & seamen, under your Lordship's Command, since the King's Troops entered Philadelphia ; & I shall be happy, by your Lordship's Assistance to have my sentiments of them made as acceptable & generally known as possible.

But my thanks are more particularly due to Captⁿ Duncan for his unwearied Attention & Judgement on all Occasions, & to Captⁿ Henry & Lieut^t Botham for the Gallantry they displayed on the 13 Ins^t, in the reduction of the Enemys Works on Mud Island ; which I request your Lordship will be pleased to communicate to those Gentlemen in the most distinguished manner.

In these acknowledgements I beg to include the Captains & Crews of the Ships in the Eastern Channel ; contributing to the success of the Attack ; more immediately assisted by the Well directed fire of the *Isis*.

I have the honor to be . . . &c. &c.

(Signed) W^m HOWE.

“The Admiral entertaining the same sense of the Zealous & Spirited Conduct of the Officers & Seamen of the Ships of War & Transports on the same Occasion will be equally happy in

every Opportunity of doing Justice to their meritorious Services.”

Howe mentioned Cornwallis and the *Isis* in his dispatches :—

“The *Isis* being as well placed in the eastern channel as the circumstances of the navigation would permit, rendered very essential service against the fort and gallies, much to the personal honour of Captain Cornwallis and credit of the discipline of his ship.”

Although the Mud Island fort had been evacuated, and the passage of the Delaware river opened up, the fort at Red Bank was still in the enemy’s occupation and, unless reduced, was in a position to make the navigation of the river extremely unpleasant. Earl Cornwallis himself resolved to undertake its capture in conjunction with the fleet. Curiously enough, his brother was the senior officer in those ships which were detailed for this purpose, and he was instructed by Howe “to render all the assistance you are able, in the manner required by the Lieut. General the Earl Cornwallis on the service under his Lordship’s conduct.” But the garrison, mindful of the hammering their friends in the Mud Island fort had received, did not await the attack. On November 20th Howe receives the following from Cornwallis :—

“Intelligence has been received that the Enemy have left a small party at Red bank to blow up the Place, & retired to Mount Holely or Burlington, that the troops stationed at Woodberry were gone the same way, and the Militia at Manto Creek marched to Woodberry ; but we are not certain of the truth of this Information. A Detachment was sent this Morning by Lord Cornwallis in two flat boats to the Battery above Manto Creek, who found a 24 Pounder mounted, but the Rebels were fled.

“They Last night burnt one of their Armed Ships.”

Howe replies the same day :—

“I have great satisfaction from the receipt of your Letter of this morning’s date the manner in which the Enemy appears to have evacuated the Battery, seems to correspond with the Matter of the Intelligence received concerning the work at Red bank ; Tho’ it is probable they will not entirely quit the last untill the troops under Lord Cornwallis have advanced.

“Our next Object will be to discover whether any passage may already be open between the Chevaux de frize or through the Eastern Channel for the transports ; Or to Endeavour to

Open such a passage for them, as soon as the Ships can proceed upon that Work.

“I have sent to day to have the Circumstances examined as far as it is practicable as the Enemy are posted. You will be pleased to prosecute the enquiry by a proper appointment of the Pilots & other intelligent Persons with you, as those circumstances become more favourable.”

Cornwallis was anxious, if possible, to capture any of the enemy's shipping which had lain under the protection of the now evacuated forts. Although he went up as far as Philadelphia, he did not succeed. The rebels had burnt their boats, except a few small vessels which had got past the recently constructed batteries under cover of darkness.

“Finding Yesterday morning,” he wrote to Howe, “that the Enemy were burning their Vessels & that the British Troops were advancing to Red bank I Ordered the *Cornwallis* (G^y) with some Armed boats up, & Captⁿ Hammond, Sir Ja^s Wallace & myself went up in hopes of getting hold of some of their Galleys, & we got to Red bank just as Lord Cornwallis entered, we then proceeded round to timber Creek, whilst the troops marched that way, but as we found nothing there, nor could get any certain intelligence of the Gallies, we went on to Philadelphia, the Enemy have burnt all their Vessels, including the Schooner Galley, but I am afraid the rest of the Gallies have got above the town.”

CHAPTER III

1777-1778

It is certain that Cornwallis's share in these operations gained for him the entire approbation of those under whom he was serving. He had proved himself thoroughly capable and imbued with a spirit of initiative : moreover, his personal bravery was beyond question. His brother, with whom he had been in close contact during the final stage, when the fort at Red Bank was abandoned, wrote in praise of him to their mother on November 29th, 1777, from Philadelphia :—

“I have the satisfaction of assuring you that William has gained the greatest credit in the attack of Fort [Mud] Island in the face of the whole army and fleet ; Lord Howe extols him to the skies, and will I am convinced represent his good behaviour in the strongest terms. This event will I am sure make you as happy as it has done me. The communication of the river is now open, and our campaign will finish in a few days. I have some hopes that Lord Howe will send the *Isis* home as she has suffered so much, if not, I am afraid he must go to Rhode Island for the *Chatham*, which will prevent our coming together ; however, I trust we shall both be with you very soon. Burgoine's disaster has greatly changed the face of affairs in this country. God only knows how this business is to end. It makes however no very material alteration as to the conclusion of our campaign.”

Owing to the damage done to the *Isis*, Cornwallis was transferred to, and took command of, the *Bristol*. Kind-hearted man that he was, he found time to write to the mother of one of his Midshipmen by name Faulkner ; she was the widow of an old shipmate. He was still on the Delaware river, and wrote on December 10th :—

MADAM,—

I will not trouble you with a letter relative to your son, as I hope you will see him very soon : but as I thought it probable that you might hear I had changed my ship, and be anxious to know the fate of my dear little friend, I could not let slip the opportunity of a few lines, to inform you I have brought him with me for many reasons. He has behaved extremely well in all things, and I do assure you is perfectly good in every respect, and bids fair to be as great a credit to the service as his father was.

His mother, unaware that Mud [or Fort, as it was called by some] Island had fallen, wrote on December 6th :—

“I wrote you two letters on the 2nd instant. I can think of nothing until the next account comes but of that detestable Fort Island, or, as some people call it, a ‘Mad’ Island. Major Cuiler said, before the letters were given out, he did not think any of the Captains had notice [or] time enough to write. The Archbishop was told by Lord Sandwich that you were well ; he spoke also with kindness, his Grace says, of you, and the *Gazette* names you and your ship often. These were lucky circumstances for me just at that time ; but then by the *Gazette* I see the service you are upon, which both makes me impatient for, and at the same time dread, the next account. That it may be a happy one is my most ardent prayer, all the comfort of my life depends upon it.

“People in general were much pleased with the successes of gen. Howe’s army, it was followed the next day by Burgoin’s [Burgoyne’s] misfortunes which gave a great allay to the joy. I suppose it is too late in the season to have any bad consequence with regard to our other forces in America. Lord Onslow tells me his cousin the captain has been all this time at New York, and that at present he has care of Lee. You will be very angry with me if I confess just now that I wish you in that disagreeable situation rather than where you were.” . . . “I can give no account of what passes here, all my thoughts are in America. Sure [surely ?] general Howe will send you home as soon as this fort is taken ; it is said here to be very strong. May it end happily, and I have the great comfort of a joyous letter from you, with a certainty of seeing both you & your brother this winter.”

It will be remembered that in October of this year General

Burgoyne was compelled to surrender with his entire army to the American General Gates at Saratoga. This was a disaster of the greatest magnitude, with the most far-reaching effects, as it directly resulted in bringing in France on the side of the American colonists, and subsequently Spain.

Burgoyne succeeded in obtaining the most generous terms of capitulation for his force. They were allowed to lay down their arms and to be repatriated, on an undertaking being given that they should not serve again in America during the war. Considerable delay, however, occurred in giving effect to the agreement.

Cornwallis did not remain long in command of the *Bristol*. He took her to Rhode Island, where he was again transferred, this time to command the *Chatham*.

Writing to the Admiralty on January 5th, 1778, Howe says :—

“The *Chatham*, which, of the two decked ships, is in the most defective state, will soon sail to be refitted in England. The *Amazon* and *Juno* will proceed under orders to the same effect ; with the transports waiting here to receive the Troops of General Burgoyne’s Army when it is ascertained at what port they are to be embarked.”

Cornwallis was ordered home, and Howe again wrote, on January 20th, to the Admiralty :—

“Captain Cornwallis, appointed to the *Chatham* for returning to England on account of the state of his health, is charged with the care of this dispatch. He will be accompanied by the *Buffalo* and *Tortoise*, with such of the Naval Transports as are judged unfit in their present condition to remain longer in this country.”

A hitch, however, occurred in the repatriation of Burgoyne’s force, and it was not until February 14th that Cornwallis sailed with his convoy. He must have had a fairly quick passage, in spite of the unfortunate name of one of his escorts !—as he wrote to the Admiralty from Spithead on March 21st, announcing his arrival. At the same time he informs his brother James of the fact ; and saying that he had had “more luck with this convoy than the last.” In this letter he also complained of his eyes, a disorder from which he suffered off and on for the remainder of his life. In April of this year he was on leave ; but the following month he was ordered to fit out the *Medea*, a new ship just launched at Bristol, where he remained some three months. The following



COUNTESS CORNWALLIS.

From a pastel by Daniel Gardner, in the possession of Messrs. Thos. Agnew & Son.

August Sandwich, who was still First Lord, gave him the command of the *Lion*, a 64-gun ship, and one in which he was destined to spend many anxious and exciting moments, and, in addition to bring home and nurse back to health the man who afterwards won the battle of Trafalgar. It speaks well for Cornwallis's popularity as an officer, that most of the crew, officers and men, he brought back with him in the *Chatham* asked to be allowed to follow him on board the *Medea* and *Lion*.

While fitting out his ship at Portsmouth he received two very interesting but sad letters from his sister-in-law Jemima Countess Cornwallis. Poor lady, she was broken down in health and felt acutely the parting from her husband, whom she adored: this probably accounted for the morbid state of anxiety she had allowed herself to get into. Though her morbidity was due to her health, her anxiety for her country was justified. Politics were in a state of turmoil. No one knew from day to day what fresh disasters were in store, and what new enemy the country might be faced with.

On September 3rd she wrote from Esher:—

“I do not know how to wish you, out or detained; all I know is that these are really frightful times in all respects. As for both sides, the infatuation is something horrible. Opposition are actually rejoicing at their own miseries (for shall we not all fall together?) because they think they are proved in the right; and Ministry most gloriously resolve to continue to the end in plans which evidently rush to destruction, rather than allow they have been in the least mistaken. By this means I am really so bilious as to think that our army in America, fleets everywhere, possessions in the West Indies, &c., &c., will be frittered away and destroyed in about another twelve months; and not impossible that within that time we have commotions at home also. Don't laugh at my being political. I assure you I do not think a female ought to talk politics, but when it comes to husband, friends, &c., one must feel, and it will out.”

And again on September 14th from Mansfield Street:—

“I hope you are not sailed, that you may have the satisfaction of getting this to tell you I had a letter last night from my Lord, July 30th; a short one, having just heard of the ship sailing. He has wrote by the packet which sailed the same day, August 1st, and those letters of course we expect every instant. My Lord

was well, writes from New York, but says he has a country house on Long Island, close to the encampment of the 33rd. I shall not enter into the news because I imagine Lady Cornwallis will, Lord Townsend having just sent it us all collected together. I do not know what to wish about you, except as usual that you were in orders and Rector of Ingham! I am convinced that though we all fancy we know and expect it, we shall in a few days, upon hearing that Spain has declared against us, and their fleet joined the French, be all as much astonished and thunder-struck as if we never had heard there was such a country as Spain in the world. I put not my trust in princes nor in any child of man; but I hope in the mercy and justice of God, that we shall not be utterly destroyed, and that our enemies, who are at least as wicked, will be as much punished by folly, obstinacy, and infatuation in their rulers as we are. Upon this great charitable plan of mine you will perceive what peaceful happy days we have to look forward to. Well, it will end. I am as yellow as an orange, feel very ill, am kept here by Sir John Fielding, who chooses to make my mother appear against some thieves (that stole a trunk of hers) on Friday. Hope to get away to Bath on Saturday."

When one reads this it is possible to imagine the state of mind in which many thinking people in England were at that time. It is only comparable with the feeling in the country at the height of the submarine warfare in 1917; even then there was nothing like the degree of despondency suggested in this letter.

Cornwallis also heard from his brother about this time, telling him of the naval activities in America. His letter, dated September 5th, is written from New York:—

"When the French fleet first appeared off the Hook, some of Lord Howe's ships were at the Narrows, and had they attempted going in the first tide, I think we were ruined; but they gave Lord Howe time to post all his ships advantageously at the Hook, and remained about ten days looking at him, when they went away to Rhode Island. As soon as they were gone, the *Reasonable* and *Centurion* arrived from Halifax, the *Renown* from the West Indies, and the *Cornwall* of Byron's Fleet.

"With this reinforcement Lord Howe followed them to Rhode Island; when the French saw him off they came out to attack him; Lord Howe stood out to sea, whether to avoid an action or to draw the enemy from Rhode Island is not known;

however, in a few hours a most violent gale of wind came on which totally dispersed both fleets. The *Apollo*, with Lord Howe's flag on board, was dismasted. In a few days Lord Howe assembled his fleet at the Hook, and Monsieur D'Estaing did the same off the Capes of Delaware. In the meantime your old friend the *Isis* fell in with a French 74, and obliged her to sheer off. The French fleet suffered much by the storm ; they returned for 24 hours to Rhode Island to take their sick on board, and then went away to Boston. Lord Howe, who was joined by the *Monmouth* of Byron's squadron, followed the enemy to Boston, in hopes of overtaking some of the disabled ships ; the *Isis* is come in here to refit, being much shattered in her masts and rigging."

CHAPTER IV

1779

IN January of the following year (1779) Cornwallis sailed in the *Lion* in charge of a convoy for the West Indies. He again had trouble with the Masters of the West India merchantmen, for, having arrived at St. Lucia, he writes from there to the Admiralty on April 3rd :—

“On the passage out with the West India convoy, on 5th February finding them much dispersed, I made the signal for the *Deal Castle* to keep them within their limits. Captain Parker reported to me that many of them absolutely refused to obey his orders, particularly Jesse Curling, master of the ship *Landover*, bound to Jamaica, who was exceedingly insolent and abusive to Captain Parker, and told him that he would not bear down for him, and that no man in England should make him. I hope their Lordships will be pleased to take notice of this matter, as it appears to be very hard that an officer should be insulted by the very people whom he is employed to protect. It was particularly so in the case of Captain Parker, as he was extremely attentive in keeping the convoy together, and I think it was greatly owing to his assiduity that we were able to carry them all safe to Barbadoes. The *Parnassus*, Captain Carr, and some few others behaved very well ; but I cannot say that the masters of the West India ships are much improved since I had the honour of conducting them last.”

In another letter on the same subject he said :—

“The *Lion* was obliged to fire 140 cannon shots to keep them [the convoy] in their places.”

Reference has already been made to the precarious state of health of Jemima, Countess Cornwallis. Early this year her husband had been on leave in England, but had returned to his command in America in April. Another parting seems to have

been more than his poor wife could bear, for it precipitated an illness which proved fatal. Being apprised of her dangerous condition, Earl Cornwallis threw up his command, and dashed home. But she was at the point of death when he arrived, and died a few days later, it has always been said, of a broken heart.

Her husband wrote a disconsolate letter to his brother, acquainting him with the melancholy news :—

“I have not wrote to you lately, as I knew you would hear everything about me, and my letters could only have given you uneasiness in reading and me pain in writing. I am now returning to America, not with views of conquest and ambition, nothing brilliant can be expected in that quarter ; but I find this country quite unsupportable to me. I must shift the scene ; I have many friends in the American army ; I love that army, and flatter myself that I am not quite indifferent to them.

“I hope Sir H. Clinton will stay, and my returning to him is likely to induce him to do so.

“If he insists on coming away, of course I cannot decline taking the command, and must make the best of it ; and I trust that good intentions and plain dealing will carry me through. I most heartily wish you all possible success, and that you may have an opportunity of acquiring great honour and some money. I don't think it impossible that we may meet in the West Indies, as I have signified my willingness to go thither, if any occasion should present itself, and there are not amongst our generals many volunteers for that service. My children are, thank God, vastly well ; may all happiness attend you.”

Cornwallis's next adventure was the battle of Grenada. Admiral Byron [Hon. John Byron], Commander-in-Chief, had accompanied a homeward-bound West India fleet out of danger, and was returning with his squadron of twenty-one ships of the line (of which the *Lion* was one) to St. Lucia, where he learnt of the capture of St. Vincent by the French. He sailed immediately with a body of troops under General Grant in order to recapture it. On his way there he was informed of D'Estaing's descent upon Grenada and determined to go to the assistance of Lord Macartney, who, although he had conducted a spirited defence, had been forced to surrender to a greatly superior force. The French fleet of twenty-seven sail of the line were lying at anchor in the harbour of St. George and got under way so soon as the

British were sighted. The action, which took place on July 6th, was entirely indecisive, principally due to the incapacity of both commanders. The *Lion* suffered severely. In his report to the Admiralty upon the engagement Byron wrote :—

“The ships that suffered most were those the action began with, and the *Grafton*, Captain Collingwood; the *Cornwall*, Captain Edwards, and the *Lion*, Captain Cornwallis.” Of these ships, he said, they were “so disabled in their masts and rigging as to be totally incapable of keeping up with the Squadron. . . . The *Lion*, being likewise much to Leeward, having lost her main and mizzen topmasts, and the rest of rigging and sails being cut in a very extraordinary manner. She bore away to the Westward when the fleet tacked, and to my great surprise no ship of the enemy was detailed after her.”

The *Lion* had twenty-one killed and thirty wounded in this engagement. Disabled as she was, it was found impossible for her to beat to windward; her Captain therefore made up his mind to run to the north. The *Monmouth* had also suffered severely, and she, too, became a straggler from the fleet.

“Two days afterwards Cornwallis, who was also struggling to the Northward, saw a ship to windward with her fore topsail unbent and main topmast in course of being struck. She took no notice of his private signal, so he prepared, as far as he could, to fight. But this enemy was the *Monmouth*; in the afternoon the two ships closed each other, Fanshawe sent a boat across to the *Lion*, and then they parted Company.” [Extract from essay on the Battle of Grenada by Lieutenant-Commander J. H. Owen, R.N.].

The *Lion* reached Port Royal, Jamaica, without further adventure on July 20th.

News of the battle having reached home, Cornwallis was the recipient of letters from his relatives congratulating him on his escape. The first to write was his brother James, now Dean of Canterbury :—

“We are at last fully relieved from our dreadful suspense about you, and I most heartily congratulate you upon having gained so much credit in the late engagement. Middleton, who was so good as to call upon me at Wrotham on purpose to assure me of your safety, spoke of your conduct in these terms. I have

seen Admiral Barrington also, who said you were certainly gone to Jamaica, and in the most honourable way. You have gained one object then, and that certainly the first; but I cannot help now expressing a wish for the secondary one in your profession, that is, a good rich Spanish prize.

“Admiral Barrington is come home in very ill-humour, and represents our situation in the West Indies as truly lamentable, where we thought ourselves strongest. Upon the whole, nothing can look worse than our affairs, although we have not yet had any great loss excepting Grenada, we are every day in apprehension of some bad news. How different from last war, when we were only accustomed to hear of victory.”

Admiral Barrington was Byron's second in command. He had been wounded in the fight, and was sent home with dispatches, and on arrival appears to have criticized his late Commanding Officer pretty severely.

Cornwallis next hears from his mother :—

“I have been in great anxiety for you and had no joy in the great commendations you have had here, until I was certain you were safe at Jamaica. Barrington came to me immediately upon his coming home. He said he was sure you were gone to Jamaica; by the situation your ship was in, it was he thought impossible you could reach any of the Leeward Islands, the current and wind would carry you to Jamaica in seven days. I believe he has done your behaviour great justice, for before any other accounts could come, never anybody received more general applause, nobody's conduct was ever more celebrated. I have had congratulations from all kinds of people. Lady Mornington had the other day a letter from Lord Longford, in which he said that a person that was at Portsmouth was on board the *Lion* during the action, described the behaviour of the Captain and the ship, nothing could be more honourable than their conduct. I have heard from other hands that you are talked very highly of by our whole fleet, which has not been out again since they were chased up the Channel by the combined fleet. People were diverted with the humour of the sailors belonging to Admiral Ross's ship, which has a bust of George the 2nd upon it. They wrapped their clothes round the head of the bust, and said George the 2nd should not see an English fleet chased up their own Channel. However, all thinking people say it was right not to

run the risk ; they were vastly superior, and had we been beaten, the consequence would have been terrible.”

Spain had, on June 16th of this year, joined France in alliance against England. The last part of this letter refers to the occasion when a combined French and Spanish fleet of over sixty sail of the line appeared at the entrance of the Channel. The British fleet under Hardy was far outnumbered and forced to retire.

Cornwallis's uncle, the Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote :—

“ Though I am pressed in time, having only just now heard that a mail is to be made up this night for Jamaica, I cannot let slip the opportunity of sending you a few lines in return for your very kind letter. After having been long under anxious doubts about your safety, it gave me the utmost satisfaction, I assure you, to hear that you had got safe to Jamaica. It was certainly very unfortunate that your ship should have been so early and so greatly damaged in the engagement. But it is no small comfort to us to hear from every quarter your courage and conduct throughout the transaction so highly extolled, as to establish your character of a brave and able officer among all ranks and degrees of people. I most heartily pray for success to you in all future operations, and that your laudable endeavours may meet with the encouragement and recompense they so richly deserve.”

Earl Cornwallis, who had returned to America, wrote from New York :—

“ I have wrote to you several times from different places, but whether you have heard of me or from me since you left England is I think uncertain. On recollection, however, you must have heard from Lieutenant Stone of my fatal loss, which has effectually destroyed all my hopes of happiness in this world. I will not dwell on this wretched subject, the thoughts of which harrow up my soul.

“ Although I sincerely lament the miscarriage of Admiral Byron's squadron, the reputation which you have gained has given me the greatest satisfaction. Perhaps you have heard that I was near visiting Jamaica. Where D'Estaing is we know not ; he certainly has been on the coast of Georgia, where I fear he has taken our troops. By a packet which we intercepted from Havanna to Old Spain, we find that after he had done his business in Georgia he was bound to Halifax, and then that La Motte Piquet was to return with his squadron to Cape Francois ; we

know not where the remainder of D'Estaing's squadron is to winter.

"God bless you ; may success, honour and riches attend you ; mind, I put honour first, which you will approve of."

His old friend, Captain J. Leveson-Gower, also added his congratulations in a gossip letter :—

"I thank you a thousand times for your letter from Jamaica, which you wrote immediately after your arrival there, and gave me very great satisfaction in knowing you had escaped the millions of shots which you had fired at you.

"We long before had heard of the great share you had in that very severe action of the 6th July, and of the shattered condition of the *Lion* ; but were kept a tedious length of time before we were relieved from our anxious suspense of knowing you personally, except from Fanshawe, who had not an intercourse with the *Lion* sufficient to satisfy us so fully as we wished in regard to you. Lady Cornwallis sent me your account of the action, and of what happened to the *Lion* after it. I was then at Eldon in Suffolk, and shewed it to Admiral Keppel, who spoke so handsomely of you upon it as quite quieted all those fears you had raised in her mind of any possibility of your being blamed for bearing up for Jamaica. Since Fanshawe came to England I have had a letter from him in which he says that, after he had lost company with you, he found a most extraordinary windward current, without which he could never have got up to St. Kitts. More pleasant scenes I hope will present themselves to you, but more glorious cannot, for it is not possible for man to acquire more glory at any one period than you have acquired. At home we are in much the same way we long have been, without exertion, and scarce thinking of anything but to save appearances. I thought it was impossible that they could have trusted our fleet to Sir Charles Hardy, and could not doubt what I heard that Lord Howe would be called upon, knowing their hatred of Admiral Keppel was such as was not to be got the better of ; to Lord Howe therefore I went and begged he would give me leave to serve with him as a volunteer or in any other manner he should think proper to employ me. He was indeed most obligingly civil to me, but he has not been called upon, not even in the moment when they were really frightened, I mean at the time the combined fleets were upon our coasts ; nor was he the least taken notice of

then when he went to shew himself at Court. At this time I thought it right that every living creature should do whatever he could for the salvation of this now poor country, accordingly I wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty desiring him to acquaint the Lords Commissioners that, if they thought my service could be of any use in the present critical situation of affairs, I was ready to go on any service and in any manner they would employ me. The next day I received a letter from Mr. Secretary saying he had read and communicated my letter, and was my humble servant, and I have heard no more. I wish I could serve under anybody of character, but no such are now employed, and by not being employed I have avoided being an eye-witness to the very disgraceful retreat our fleet made from the combined fleets; and sorry I am to say that many disgraceful circumstances did attend that retreat or more properly flight."

However much it may be said that British naval prestige was lowered by the indefinite results of the battle of Grenada, it is quite certain that Cornwallis's reputation was enhanced.

CHAPTER V

1780

REPAIRS to the *Lion* took a considerable time, and it was not until the following year (1780) that Cornwallis was again able to put it to sea. It was in March of this year that he had his first serious engagement when holding an independent command. He was Acting Commodore of a small squadron consisting of his own ship the *Lion* (64), the *Bristol* (50) and *Janus* (44). On March 20th he fell in with a squadron of French ships, consisting of two of 74, one of 64, and two frigates—one of 56 and another of 36 guns—the whole commanded by La Motte Piquet. Perceiving their superiority, the French immediately gave chase. The following addressed to Sir Peter Parker, his Commander-in-Chief at Jamaica, is Cornwallis's own account of what happened that day and the next :—

SIR,—

Cruizing off Mont Christ with the *Lion*, *Bristol* & *Janus*, on Monday the 20th of March, at break of day, we perceived four sail of French Line of Battle Ships standing for us at the distance of 7 or 8 Miles, we immediately bore away, but it falling calm soon after I sent to the *Bristol* & *Janus* to inform them that it was my Intentions the Ships should stay by & support each other. A gentle Breeze sprang up in the afternoon & the Enemy came up very fast, we formed the Line ahead.

Between four & five the *Bristol* began to fire at the headmost of the Enemy's Ships, which was kept up by us all during the Night; the Enemy firing their Bow guns, & as they sailed faster than us frequently yawed & fired their Broadides, but they would not come alongside; they fired very ill & did us little or no damage.

On Tuesday the 21st about 7 in the Morning it fell calm, &

the *Janus* being near the Commanding Officer's Ship kept a constant & well directed fire at her, so that she was glad with the first Air of Wind to get away, with the loss of her Miz topmast, & fore topgallant Mast. The *Bristol* & *Lion* got their Boats out & towed to the assistance of the *Janus*; & the other French ships did the same to assist their Commanding Officer: this brought on a general firing until eleven, when the French edged off: It then fell calm again when we were within random shot, & continued so until one o'clock: When a light breeze springing up we bore away to join the *Janus*, who had crossed us during the action, & had got a considerable distance, & I was under apprehensions the Enemy would cut her off; but they suffered us to join her, & to get 4 or 5 Miles from them, whilst they continued under an easy Sail repairing their Damages. We stood on in a Line abreast during the night, & the French did not come within gunshot. On Wednesday the 22nd at 7 in the morning we saw 3 sail at a great distance to Leeward, upon which the Enemy hauled their Wind, being then little more than gunshot from us; as we believed the strangers to be the *Ruby* & two Frigates we in our turn chased them until one o'clock in the evening; but the Ships to Leeward being at too great a distance to discern our Signals, & the *Janus* being hull down astern, & in no condition to chace, we bore up to join the other Ships.

The force of the French Ships appeared to us to be two of 74 & two of 64 guns.

I cannot upon this occasion help expressing how much I feel myself obliged to Captain Pakenham of the *Bristol* for his great attention and diligence during the whole time.

Poor Captain Glover was very ill and died on the Tuesday morning in the very hour he had so ardently wished to see.

I should do great injustice to the Officers & Seamen of the three Ships if I did not declare that they behaved with the greatest Spirit & good Order.

There were not more than 10 or 12 Men killed & wounded in the three Ships.

I have the honour to be, Sir, yours, etc. . . .,

W. CORNWALLIS.

It will be observed that although Cornwallis could not be certain what the strange sail were he saw early on the morning

of the second day, he took a chance of their being friends, and in his turn chased the enemy. As events turned out they were British men-of-war, but only frigates, and even with these two ships he was still vastly inferior to the French. But they had had enough and declined further combat. Had the strangers been enemies a different story might have been told ; but it seems that the word “ fear ” did not form part of Cornwallis’s vocabulary. Sir Peter Parker expressed in the strongest terms “ his approbation of the marked good conduct and intrepidity of Captain Cornwallis, and all the officers and men under his command.”

In connection with the death of Captain Glover, there was rather a curious sequel, if the *Recollections of James Antony Gardner*, a publication by the Naval Records Society, are to be believed. They say : “ During Cornwallis’s engagement with La Motte Piquet (20–21 March, 1780), Captain Glover of the *Janus*, who had been ill for some time died during the Action, and a Lieut. Stephens fought the ship. After the engagement he went on board Cornwallis’s ship and reported the death of his Captain, who was a personal friend of Cornwallis. Cornwallis reproved Stephens for not having brought his Captain on the quarter deck to die, in spite of the Surgeon’s report that he was unable to leave his cot. This fact, according to Gardner, Cornwallis never forgot, for subsequently when Stephens was in command of one of the ships of the Grand Fleet off Brest in 1804, upon which Gardner was serving, Cornwallis made a signal of disapprobation as to the ship’s station in line, upon which Stephens said to Gardner, ‘ Did I not tell you that Billy-Blue would hold me in his kind remembrance ?—see how he begins to compliment me before the whole fleet.’ ”

The first to congratulate him on his gallant conduct was his devoted mother, who writes from London on June 4th :—

“ The hopes of seeing you in the autumn, and the commendations I have heard of you, has done me more good than all Mr. Partridge’s drops and julips. I am quite well. It is impossible for anybody of your rank in the navy to stand higher in character than you do. I hear this from all sorts of people. I have kept a letter of Lord Townshend’s upon this last affair with La Motte Piquet, to shew you when you come home. This has struck him certainly more than anything you have yet done, as it is the first time he has taken any notice of any of your actions to me.

I think in general it has been more talked of, I suppose your having had the command is the reason ; and indeed I think you deserve more commendation, as in this affair both courage and conduct was shown in a very high degree. The Dean has been in town ten days ; he says he meets with congratulations from everybody. . . .

“ Politics has been in a strange way, and with these, friends, everything, gives place to them. Rodney’s character is very high at present. I shall enclose the abstract of his letter as inserted in the *Gazette*. As some of the Captains under him must have done very well, or we could not have had the advantage, it seems hard their names should not be mentioned. The friends of the Captains in that fleet are in a very disagreeable situation ; until the Admiral writes a more explicit letter. Nothing is yet known of the dissolution in Parliament ; it is rather supposed to be designed. . . . Lord North’s having two questions carried against him made them determined upon dissolving the Parliament. He has now got a majority again, and people now think that design is laid aside.”

Cornwallis received the congratulations of Sir George Rodney, under whom he was destined to serve the following year, and who was at this date in command of the Leeward Islands Station. His letter dated July 20th is written from the *Sandwich*, his flagship :—

“ Nothing can make me more happy than having an opportunity of congratulating you on your gallant behaviour against La Motte Piquet ; all the letters I have intercepted acknowledge his great superiority, and allow that he was fairly beat by an inferior number. To have you with me will make [me] very happy, as I should then be certain of being well supported. I hope Sir Peter Parker will let you go home with the next convoy, your ship will then be in time to be coppered and to join me by January. The enemy mean for certain to have all their naval power in these seas ; here Britain must rise or fall. I dare say you have read my letter. I wish all had been published. I meant it should, and was it to be wrote again, I would not alter a tittle. Had you been with me you would have been shocked, it was really too bad. Once more I can only say to have you with me will be the greatest favour the Admiralty can shew me.”

In both the last two letters reference is made to Rodney’s

dispatch after his engagement with de Guichen in April of this year. In it Rodney severely criticized his Captains for not supporting him. Only part of it was made public, but sufficient to cause many to complain bitterly of the way he had represented their conduct in his letter. In a letter to his wife he said : " My public letter, I am sorry they did not publish ; it was truth, truth itself : and I will never consent to erase one word of it. It is indifferent to me whether Parliament enquires into it : I will prove it true."

His prophecy " Here Britain must rise or fall " proved particularly true. Cornwallis was a friend and correspondent of Captain Walter Young, who was Rodney's Flag-Captain. Writing of his chief, Young said : " Sir George and I agree very well and I make no doubt that we shall continue so. He is a good natural man with all his pomposity and I apprehend has been most grossly imposed upon by sycophants and mercenary wretches formerly. I wish he was steady and frugal. He holds money in no value notwithstanding his suffering for want of it." It will be remembered how Rodney previous to this date had been in constant financial difficulties.

In June of this year Cornwallis was ordered by Sir Peter Parker to see a homeward bound convoy through the Gulf of Florida. Having completed his task, he was cruising in the neighbourhood of his previous encounter when he fell in with a fleet under De Ternay. On this occasion the French were in even greater superiority than the last. It is curious how, throughout his naval career, Cornwallis should have been destined, whenever he met the enemy, to have been invariably inferior in strength. He was always to find himself in the most awkward situations, and then to have to extricate himself by his ability and courage ; and he did so on every occasion without the loss of a ship. On this occasion his force consisted of the *Lion* (64), *Ruby* (64), *Bristol* (50) and the frigate *Niger*. De Ternay had seven ships of the line. The following account of the engagement is taken from Sir William Clowes's *History of the Royal Navy* [vol. 3. pp. 474-7]. Cornwallis's own report upon the affair is singularly lacking in detail :—

" On the morning of June 20, a number of sail were seen from north-east to east ; the squadron then steering east, with the wind at south-south-east. The strangers were a body of French trans-

ports, carrying the 6,000 troops destined for Rhode Island, and convoyed by a division of seven ships of the line—1 eighty, 2 seventy-fours, and 4 sixty-fours—under the command of Commo-dore de Ternay. Two of the ships of war were with the convoy, the remainder very properly to windward. The latter therefore stood on, across the bows of the British, to rejoin their consorts, and then all hauled their wind to the south-west, standing in column towards the enemy. Cornwallis on his part had kept on to reconnoitre the force opposed to him; but one of his ships, the *Ruby*, 64, was so far to leeward that the enemy, by keeping near the wind, could pass between her and him. She therefore went about and steered south-west, on the port tack, close to the wind. The French, who were already heading the same way, were thus brought on her weather quarter in chase. Cornwallis then wore his division, formed line of battle on the same tack as the others, and edged down towards the *Ruby*. If the French now kept their wind, either the *Ruby* must be cut off, or Cornwallis, to save her, must fight the large odds against him. De Ternay, however, did not keep his wind. ‘The enemy,’ wrote Cornwallis, ‘kept edging off and forming line, though within gunshot. At 6.30 p.m., seeing we had pushed the French ships to leeward sufficiently to enable the *Ruby*, on our lee bow, to join us, I made the signal to tack.’ As the British squadron went about to stand east again, the French heading west-south-west, hoisted their colours and opened fire in passing. The *Ruby* kept on till she fetched the wake of the British column, when she too tacked. The French then tacked also, in succession, and the two columns stood on for a while in parallel lines, exchanging shots at long range, the British to windward. Cornwallis very properly declined further engagement with so superior a force. He had already done much in saving a ship so greatly exposed.”

This affair has been much discussed by naval strategists and tacticians, largely on account of the French having declined to take advantage of a greatly inferior force which, had they wanted to, they could have annihilated. It must, however, be remembered that de Ternay’s primary object was the successful disembarkation of Rochambeau’s army which he was convoying to America. Bearing this in mind, the following extracts from a French version of the affair are of interest. These are taken from *Étude Historique sur la Marine de Louis XVI*, and are by a celebrated

French sailor Liberge de Granchain [edited by de Bouclon]. He says : “ La nécessité de ne pas compromettre le sort des navires de transport ne nous permettaient pas de poursuivre à outrance les Anglais.” He then quotes the Duc de Lauzun who was on board the *Provence*, who, in his *Memoirs*, said : “ L’escadre anglaise, fort inférieure à nous, ne pouvait nous échapper si nous eussions manœuvrer supportablement ; mais Mons le Chevalier de Ternay voulait éviter de se battre. Il se battait pendant trois quarts d’heure d’assez loin ; les vaisseaux anglais s’échappèrent et s’en tirèrent beaucoup plus glorieusement que nous.”

De Granchain proceeds to defend De Ternay and says : “ Tout militaire doit suivre rigoureusement les instructions qu’il a reçues. M. le Chevalier de Ternay n’avait point de mission de battre les Anglais, mais bien d’escorter son convoi et de débarquer le corps d’armée de Rochambeau à Rhode Island. Il se montra donc fidèle aux principes de l’art militaire, en laissant échapper l’occasion de remporter une victoire décisive sur les anglais plutôt que de manquer le but de sa mission.”

De Ternay, in his account of the affair to his Government, said : “ Knowing the magnitude of the expedition I was entrusted with, and finding from his conduct that the officer who had the honour to command the British Squadron was not to be trifled with, I judged it most prudent to decline an action as much as possible.”

After this exploit Cornwallis, with three other ships, was sent to Mobile by Sir Peter Parker. His orders were to attack the Spaniards who were contemplating a descent upon Pensacola. When Cornwallis arrived he found the harbour empty. Writing of this to the Admiralty, Parker says :—

“ I trust that, if the Spaniards had not withdrawn their men of war from Mobile and desisted from their intended attack on Pensacola, Captain Cornwallis would have totally destroyed them.”

On July 4th Earl Cornwallis writes to his brother from Charlestown. He appears optimistic. One feels that, like other British commanders in America at that date, “ The wish was father to the thought ” :—

“ I am sure the action will do you the greatest honour,” he said. “ I hope, as soon as you have got upon copper [coppering the ship’s bottom], you will return to Jamaica, unless some more eligible service should offer ; at all events let me conjure you to continue serving as long as the war lasts.

“ My last letters from England were of the 17th of March, and as I am now stationed out of the regular line of the packets, I expect to hear very seldom. The Province of South Carolina has totally submitted, and American affairs wear a better aspect than they have done for some time. The people of the back country, who are very numerous, seem most sincerely happy at returning to their union with Great Britain, and execrate the tyranny of their late rulers. Don’t omit any opportunity of letting me hear from you.”

Soon after this Cornwallis was dispatched home in charge of a large convoy. It was upon this occasion that Nelson, who was desperately ill, and invalided, took the opportunity of a passage to England in the *Lion*. The two men had become acquainted in Jamaica, and had formed a lasting friendship which was only broken by Nelson’s death.

Writing of Nelson to the Admiralty, informing them of his returning home, Parker said :—

“ Captain Nelson is so emaciated and in so bad a state of health that I doubt whether he will live to get home. I wish much for his recovery. His abilities in his profession would be a loss to the service.”

As was natural, Cornwallis’s mother, now getting an old woman, was much excited at the prospect of seeing her beloved youngest son, safe home from the dangers he had encountered. She could not contain herself until she actually saw him, but wrote when he was at sea. The following letters were the first that greeted him :—

Nov. 11, LONDON.

You know the impatience of my temper ; the wind is consulted every hour of the day ; and my good or ill humour depends entirely upon the going of the smoke.

I have had two letters from you since you met with Ternay, which made me give no credit to the applause given to your behaviour upon that occasion by the newspapers, until Mr. Pollock sent me the *Gazette* with your letter. I do not know which has been most commended, your conduct as an officer or your manner of representing the affair. Both most highly I do assure you, and why did you not mention this event in your letters to me. I believe you feared I should grow too vain.

Your pocket will not be much the richer for what you have been doing these two last years, but you are a great gainer in reputation, which in my opinion is much more valuable. No unlucky accident in your voyage home and I shall think the two years well spent.

Your brother, with about 1,500 troops, has completely beat Gates, who had 6,500. It is impossible for anybody to have gained more honour than he has done ; nobody talked of anything else for a fortnight. Ross, who came with the news, left London yesterday to return to America in the Packet.

I hope this northerly wind will not blow you too near the French coast.

The letter in the *Gazette* which Lady Cornwallis referred to was one from Sir Peter Parker to the Admiralty ; it said :—

“ Captain Cornwallis displayed on this occasion his usual spirit and conduct,” and goes on to give Cornwallis’s own account of the affair. As usual, this was modesty itself, for his concluding remarks are : “ The whole of this is a matter of small importance ; but I thought it my duty to inform you of every particular, for fear of misrepresentations, as the enemy are sometimes not very correct in their accounts.”

Nine days later his mother again writes :—

“ The wind has been in all points of the compass to-day, my head and heart is full of you.

“ The more I think of your present employ, the worse I like it. Upon looking in the Red Book, I find a 40 and two 28 gun ships is all you are to have after you have passed the Bay, and the care of above two hundred merchantmen is not a very pleasant thing, when the French must know how small your force is, most likely they will send a much stronger to intercept you. They know exactly how far the large ships are to go with you. Without this alarming circumstance, the season of the year when storms must be expected which will probably separate them would be full vexation enough. (I was so uncharitable as to think that if any accident happened to the convoy, it would be a great alleviation to the person who appointed it if any blame could be laid upon you.) I fear all the care in the world may not be able to prevent some misfortunes happening.

“ When I got so far the Archbishop came in, wondered I

could have any fears. He said the Ministry must know what ships the French had out, and where they were, that it was provided accordingly. He said Lord S[andwich] at dinner the other day, talking of this convoy, said you were the most promising young man in the service. The Archbishop and Lord North were present. Upon hearing of this I have scratched out all my uncharitableness, for so it must certainly be. He could have no view or interest in saying this when there was nobody belonging to you in company. I am quite reconciled to him ; he has chosen you for this material convoy from the good opinion he has of you. May all my fears for you prove foolish and unreasonable."

In the original of this letter the sentence in brackets is erased : it is, of course, to what the old lady referred when she wrote " I have scratched out all my uncharitableness."

 Shortly after his arrival the latter end of November, Cornwallis was given a month's leave.

CHAPTER VI

1781

At the expiration of his leave Cornwallis returned to the *Lion*, which ship was still in commission at Portsmouth. In the summer of this year Earl Cornwallis had written to their mother congratulating her on "William's very handsome action with La Motte Piquet," and at the same time expressing his fears that some of his brother's "discontented friends would put him out of humour with the Admiralty and try to hinder his serving." He had no cause for alarm however, "William" had every intention of continuing to serve so long as he was permitted to.

There is a curious letter in existence written by Cornwallis when lying at Spithead in February of the New Year (1781). A seaman on board the *Lion* applied in the usual way for his discharge. When forwarding this application it was customary for the Captain of the man's ship to "state his case." Cornwallis, however, was not satisfied that the man's discharge was justifiable, and wrote to the Admiralty asking permission to defer sending in the man's petition until his ship sailed. The reason he gave was—"Least it should tempt others to make the same application, for no person can have less pretensions to his discharge than this man, having been a miserable wretch and of no kind of use for a great while after he was received into the ship. But, nursed and fattened up for two years and a half at the Government's expense, is now fit to serve his country."

Most praiseworthy sentiments! Cornwallis was ever mindful of the welfare of his subordinates, when they were worthy of it. He evidently did not consider this man was, or else thought that a few more years' service would insure his eventually becoming a good citizen, when the time came for his retirement.

In March of this year the *Lion* formed part of Admiral Darby's fleet which was sent to relieve Gibraltar, a task which was

successfully carried out. The expedition returned to England in May.

Cornwallis was now thirty-seven years of age, and had attained such a position in his profession that he probably considered himself justified in exercising a little patronage on behalf of his less fortunate friends and brother-officers. Anyhow he tried it, and with success; for having written to the First Lord on behalf of a Mr. Stone, Lord Sandwich replies:—

“Though I am overwhelmed with applications, and involved in innumerable difficulties with regard to the promotion of Lieutenants to the rank of Master and Commander, yet I think your title to every mark of favour in consequence of your great merit as a sea officer is such that I will endeavour to oblige you in the object you have in view, by taking an early opportunity to give promotion to Mr. Stone.”

Less than a week after this was written Cornwallis received another and still more complimentary letter from Sandwich, and is given command of the best ship of her class in the Navy.

“As the *Canada* is at present without a captain, I do not lose a moment in informing you that she is at your service; the enclosed letter will shew you the estimation in which she was held by her last Commander; and as I understand from other quarters that she is the best ship in the navy of her rate, I am sure I cannot do my duty better than by offering her to one of the most distinguished officers in the King’s service.

“It is intended that the *Canada* shall go with Admiral Digby instead of the *Valiant*, which, upon consideration, is found unfit for the coast of America on account of her very great draught of water. We shall therefore give immediate directions for her being fitted for a foreign voyage.”

The following August the *Canada* formed part of the squadron which sailed with a convoy of troops for America under Admiral Digby, and in October 1781 was engaged at Sandy Hook in effecting the disembarkment of English troops destined for the relief of Yorktown, an attempt which proved futile. They were subsequently used in another part of the country, but were too late to be of any use to Marquis Cornwallis, who was forced to capitulate on October 19th.

German mercenaries were employed in this war, but it is difficult to understand why British regiments were described as

“British Grenadiers and Jägers” [a German term for rifle regiments], yet this is the description given in Admiral Hood’s Fleet Order of October 18th as to the disembarkment of troops, special reference being made to the Germans as apart from the British. [A distinguished British General whom the author told about this order said that many years ago he was watching a football match at Aldershot, in which a battalion of the Rifle Brigade was taking part, and he heard a man shout out, “Play up the Jaggers.” He wondered at the time what was meant, and it was the only occasion during his career that he had heard anything like the German word “Jäger” applied to a British rifle regiment.]

Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, Digby’s second in command, was a great personal friend of Cornwallis, although considerably his senior, and frequently corresponded with him. An attempt was made this month to get into communication with Earl Cornwallis, Major Cochran was the officer entrusted with the task, which he carried out successfully, getting through the enemy’s lines and delivering his dispatches on October 10th. Upon his return Hood wrote to Captain Cornwallis from his flag-ship, the *Barfleur* :—

“Major Cochran got safe to Lord Cornwallis, and the boat in which he went is come back. She left York the 9th, at night. The *Charon* is burnt by red hot shot, and the enemy throw shells into Lord Cornwallis’s works, but cannot move his Lordship, who is in high spirits, has plenty of provisions, and the only man he has lost of any consequence is the head commissary. This is all I yet know, which I thought would be some satisfaction to you. I expect to hear more to-morrow from headquarters. The ships are mostly at Staten Island and will be here to-morrow if the wind permits.”

It is difficult, when reading this letter, to realize that Earl Cornwallis was forced to capitulate on October 19th, only ten days later.

After the fall of Yorktown the fleet went back to New York, and the Admirals discussed the question of the future. It was decided to send Hood back to his proper station (Leeward Islands), and Hood persuaded Digby to let him have most of the North America ships—one of which was the *Canada*.

A study of Hood’s fleet orders shows that desertion was rife

in the Navy at this period. "Row-guards" in harbours and endless precautions were taken to prevent it. Marines, as usual, were told off to do the police work. There were instances of officers as well as men deserting, as one of Cornwallis's own ship orders prove :—

"CANADA" AT SEA, *March 18, 1782.*

A Surgeon's Mate having deserted from the ship and taken all his things with him, and it having been no uncommon thing for Midshipmen of the ship to do the same, it is hereby directed that no Petty Officer or Private man be permitted to go out of the ship without leave obtained from the Captain.

A curious order, as it would appear that the lower ranks were to suffer on account of the delinquencies of some of their junior officers. Also, one feels that, however terrible a crime it was for a Surgeon's Mate to desert, once having made up his mind to, it was perfectly natural for him to "take all his things with him," assuming, of course, that they were his own property!

That prime joints of ration meat should be the perquisites of the officers and non-commissioned officers has always been a grievance amongst the rank and file, when both officers and men drew the same ration. That it was so in 1781 the following order suggests :—

"Frequent complaints having been made of the smallness of the Pieces of Meat which fall to the Lot of the Ship's Company, it is to be strictly observed in future that there are no choice Pieces to be given, but everybody is to take an equal chance, from the Captain's mess to the lowest on the ship."

One wonders if the Admiral was an exception to this particularly just order?

It was when he was in command of the *Canada* that a good story is told of Cornwallis's tactful resource displayed when he suppressed a mutiny on board this ship. The crew, owing to the fact that their pay was considerably in arrear, sent a deputation to the Captain with the message that they would not fire a shot until they had received what was due to them. He paraded the ship's company, and proceeded calmly to address them in the following terms: "My lads, the money cannot be paid until we return to port, and as to your threat, I have only to say that I will

put you alongside the first enemy's ship I fall in with, and I am certain that the devil himself will not then keep you from fighting her."

British seamen of those days must have been a rough lot. This is of small wonder considering that probably the majority of them in time of war were forcibly conscripted. Judging by the following Fleet order, the natives could not have had much love for them :—

"Whereas great irregularities have been committed on shore particularly at the Town of Chocque, by seamen and Marines belonging to some of his Majesty's ships, even to the burning of many Houses, and thereby occasioning the loss of several lives. The respective Captains are hereby enjoined by every possible means to prevent the perpetration of such enormities for the future."

CHAPTER VII

1782

CORNWALLIS was still serving in the West Indies in January 1782. The New Year was to prove eventful for him. He played a conspicuous part in two important engagements. The first under Hood at St. Kitts, the second under Rodney in what is known as the "Battle of the Saints."

The battle between Hood and the French Admiral de Grasse was fought on two consecutive days, January 25th and 26th, 1782. The engagement on the first day afforded one of those rare examples of a fight at sea being witnessed by spectators on land. Mahan, in his *Influence of Sea Power upon History*, writes, prefatory to his description of the battle: "At noon, when the hillsides of Nevis (Island) were covered with expectant and interested sightseers." Hood, by superior seamanship, outmanœuvred the enemy and seized the anchorage they had held the night before; he was twice attacked at anchor the following day and again defeated the French, whose force was considerably superior to his own.

In his description of the fight in the same work, Captain Mahan refers to the part Cornwallis and the *Canada* played. He says: "The French flag ship *Ville de Paris*, bearing de Grasse's flag, pushed for the gap thus made, but was foiled by the *Canada* seventy four: whose Captain, Cornwallis, the brother of Lord Cornwallis, threw all his sails aback, and dropped down in front of the huge enemy to the support of the rear."

The "gap" referred to was caused by the inferior sailing of the ship immediately in rear of the *Canada*. This ship was the *Prudent*.

De Grasse himself, in the description of this engagement, states that "this little red-sided ship the *Canada* did him more harm than all the rest that he had contended."

Hood held on to his position until February 14th, always in sight of the French Fleet, then numbering thirty-three ships of the line as compared to his twenty-two. During this period he was not attacked, but, in view of his own inferiority, he certainly must have contemplated such a possibility. His attempt to deceive the French as to the true condition of his ships is shown in the following order :—

“BARFLEUR,” BASSE TERRE ROAD, ST. KITTS,
January 29th, 1782.

This Rear Admiral's Sir Samuel Hood's directions that those ships which require a topmast or topsail yard to be shifted are to do it after Sun set, taking care that the ships appear perfect at daylight ; and the ships which have their lower mast or yards wounded are to prepare for fishing them, if it cannot be done this night.

The capture of the Island of St. Kitts occurred on February 12th, when the garrison of the fortified position on Brimstone Hill surrendered to a French army after a siege of about a month. Hood, at his anchorage at Basse-Terre, could no longer be of any support to his countrymen on the Island, moral or otherwise. He had also received news of the dispersal of the French reinforcements intended for De Grasse. The French Admiral had also received this information and decided to attack his adversary before the possibility of the arrival of British reinforcements under Rodney. But Hood anticipated him. Captain Mahan tells us : “On the night of the 14th Hood summoned all his captains on board, had them set their watches by his, and at 11-0 p.m. one after another, without noise or signal, cut their cables and made sail to the Northward. [*Influence of Sea Power on History*, p. 475.]

The Admiral's actual order issued on February 14th was :—

“The Boats of the squadron to be hoisted in between six and eight o'clock, and not before six. Every ship to be ready to heave the anchors out of the ground between ten and eleven. The Captains to set their watches by the 8 o'clock gun, so that the Squadron may be under sail as nearly as possible at the same time. A Lieut. from each ship to be on board the *Barfleur* at 9 o'clock.”

De Grasse, in his account of what happened, says : “Hood

decamped at night without signals, and the next morning I found only the sick whom he left behind." [*Kerguelen Guerre Maritime de 1778*, p. 263.]

The British Admiral evidently contemplated his having to leave his wounded behind in a hospital-ship, for, as early as February 5th, he issued the following order :—

“Every ship to send Puncheons or hogsheads on board the Spanish Schooner to be filled with salt water by way of ballast, and two Butts on board the ship off Basse-Terre designed for an Hospital Ship, from whence every ship may take a long boat load of coals.”

It is hardly possible to believe that a ship, which had evidently only lately arrived as a collier, could or would be used as a hospital-ship a few days later. Yet it was so, as on February 9th a further order is issued to the effect that “The sick and wounded whom the respective Captains of the Squadron judge to be objects for an Hospital, and inconvenient to be kept on board their ships, are to be put on board the ship intended for their reception.”

Hood realized he would have to face the possibility of having to make a dash in order to avoid annihilation, and of the impossibility of taking his wounded with him, in a ship unequal to the speed of his fleet. In the same order his instructions are that “the several surgeons are to send sufficient Medicine and a week’s Water and Provisions.” So that six days later the (so-called) hospital-ship had one day’s water, medicine and provisions left when taken over by the French, whom it must be remembered were at that time in possession of the Island. Life was cheap in those days ! Hood effected a junction with Rodney off the coast of Antigua on the 25th. Rodney now being in command of the united British fleet.

The first to write to Cornwallis congratulating him upon his share in the engagement, after the news of the battle of St. Kitts had reached England, was his brother James, now Bishop of Lichfield :—

April 1st, WIMPOLE STR.

I have received your two letters ; and am sorry to find that after all your endeavours St. Kitts is gone. But although the public have sustained a loss by this expedition of the French, you have gained : I mean by a farther increase of reputation.

The great inattention of the late Ministry to public affairs, and our many consequent disgraces, at last overturned them in a constitutional manner, and I have conceived great hopes that we should now have more vigour and activity. I am certain we cannot have less ; and that we must have been totally ruined, had not our drowsy rulers been displaced. Some of them are rewarded, although most of them are bewailing their diminished consequence and receipts. . . .

The King spoke very handsomely of you the other day to Tommy Townshend, the present Secretary at War.

He also received a long and very charming letter from his mother written two days later. Her anxiety in case it should be thought she was interfering no matter how great her longing to see him is very touching :—

“I received your two letters dated the 4th and the 7th of February, and had the great pleasure of seeing your name in the *Gazette* (in consequence of the accounts that came at the same time with those letters) mentioned in the most honorable manner, but my vanity was flattered before that paper came out. Your brother had a note from Lord Mulgrave in which he said you had distinguished yourself as usual ; and he likewise had seen both Admirals Hood’s and Affleck’s letters to their brothers, who both spoke of you in most honorable terms, which soon circulated all over the town, and I had many congratulations before the *Gazette* came out. I have received your letter of the 21st of February, which gave me great pleasure to find you continued well. We had hoped Rodney might have been with you before the date of that letter ; they say here that he stopped at the Madeira to take in wine, which people are angry at. Our continual losses and heavy taxes has put the people and Parliament so much out of humour that upon a question being moved which meant to address the King for a total change of Ministers, the Court had but nine majority. His Majesty then thought it proper to dismiss the administration, and put it into the hands of Lords Rockingham and Shelburne ; there is to be a total change in all the offices.”

After giving him a list of the new members of the Cabinet, she goes on to say :—

“You mention the receiving but one letter in December. I

have written two by every packet. When Minorca was taken from us some years ago it made a great noise ; we are now so used to lose islands, we heard of its having capitulated without being the least concerned.

“ Since I wrote the above Leveson has been with me again and seems in very good spirits. He is to have the *Bombay Castle*, which will be ready in six weeks, without some other ship he likes better should become vacant. I asked if Lord Howe was to command the great fleet, he said nothing as yet was settled. In his manner of answering there was nothing that looked like any suspicion of Lord Howe’s objecting to it. In the course of the conversation, after having told me Admiral Keppel was very particularly pleased with my card of congratulation to him, he then talked of what it was probable the French would do when Rodney had joined you. He said they would either go to leeward (by which I suppose he meant Jamaica), or to America, or come home, which last he thought more likely ; in that case, some of our West India Fleet would come home. He then asked me if I wished the *Canada* to be one of those ? I answered, ‘ I shall always be happy to see him.’ You have told me often never to meddle with your destinations ; I cannot ever give a greater proof of my obedience than I have done in this case. Perhaps he meant nothing by this question ; but it was a subject my heart was so interested in, that if my fears of disobliging you had not been very great, I could not have conquered the extreme desire I had of knowing whether it was a thing thrown out by chance, and likewise eagerly expressing the happiness it would give me, but I withstood this great temptation. I suppose you will write by the first opportunity to congratulate perhaps both Admiral Keppel and Mr. Leveson, most certainly the latter [Keppel had been appointed First Lord in April of this year, and had brought in Leveson-Gower to the Admiralty], and then if you think it proper you may tell him how much his question (from my fear of offending you) perplexed me. My answer would have come with great alacrity had I only consulted my own inclinations upon it. Leveson talks of you always with the most cordial friendship. Barrington as usual made me a visit upon the accounts we had with your action with the French. He told me if there was a possibility of distinguishing himself Capt. Cornwallis would always do it.

“Lord North is well off; he has the Cinque Ports for life made up to him £4,000 a year, and this likewise gives him the bringing in four members of Parliament. If our new Administration can give us a peace they will be very well with me.”

The old Countess, who feels that old age was creeping upon her, writes again on April 3rd :—

“My letters will discover how stupid I grow, indeed much too old to correspond with any one that will pay any further regard to her letters than the inclination she has to show her affection. . . . The first audience Mr. T. T[ownshend] had upon his being appointed Secretary at War, his Majesty was very gracious, and talked a great deal to him. He commended your brother and you, but what surprised me very much, spoke handsomely of me, so I was told. I suppose my merit was producing two such sons. . . . The money by the last Administration was little attended to ; they had not the least thought of preventing everyone squandering what they pleased. The people who felt the weight of the taxes resented this neglect so strongly, it is the opinion of many we were in danger of having commotions at home, had the ministry not been changed. . . .”

CHAPTER VIII

1782

THE action between Rodney and De Grasse was fought on April 12, 1782. It was a great British victory and might have been more decisive had the advantage been pushed home. The British Commander was much criticized by his subordinates especially Hood.

Cornwallis was especially severe. Among his papers are some doggerel verses on the action. They are in his own execrable handwriting, and he probably wrote them, as one cannot imagine his taking the trouble to copy them if they had not been !

On April the twelfth, by the dawn of the day,
The French Fleet were discovered to have borne away ;
The loss of a foremast to one of their fleet
Gave cause to us Britons our prospect to greet.
We formed our line, boys, in haste to be sure,
For a sudden attack is the dread of Monsieur.
Our tacks they were different, the French on the larboard,
With a full sail to meet them, we stood on the starboard.
Drake commanded the van, whose ships were all good,
The rear (some of whom had suffer'd the ninth) under
Hood.
The French suffer'd most in passing the tack
And the *Glorieux*, a 74, lay a mere wreck ;
The top-sails of the French Admiral were both of them shot
down
And he seem'd then to lie ready our honour to crown.
Many more of their ships were brought very low
And with their wood bottoms scarce able to go.

It was now only ten, my brave boys, t'was no more ;
Had e'er England a prospect so glorious before ?
Our Admiral seized the moment a maintopsail to bend,
But for masts, sail and rigging, there seemed no need to mend.
The *Formidable* look'd all so spruce and so new
A bold leader she wanted and seem'd to call for Sir Hugh
[Palliser].

The maintopsail when bent, my brave boys, alack,
What use did they put it to ? Why laid it aback,
The French Fleet were beaten and put to the run
And the English with copper bottoms look'd on the fun ;
To larboard a sweep did Hood's squadron make
And the *Cesar* and *Ardent* did both of them take.
Our Chief he lay quiet, with good ships around him,
Some willing to move, but, the devil confound him,
He made no signal to chase nor would let others go,
Those who were willing to follow the foe.

Cries Fanshaw, Sir George, pray let me stretch on ;
My men are willing, my ship in condition.
No, no, cries Sir George, I'll be supported i' faith ;
What, leave your own Admiral, a Knight of the Bath,
To follow a Frenchman with the Cross of St. Louis ?
Lay all aback or by — I'll undo ye.
A ship or two push'd on, whether he would or no,
Intent upon honour and to conquer the foe ;
By which the French Admiral and *Hector* were taken,
And this perhaps may save our brave Admiral's bacon.
At night he lay to, in the victorious field,
Tho' the poor beaten French were ready to yield.
Had a chief worthy Britain commanded our fleet,
Twenty-five good French ships had been laid at our feet.

What, however, is of far greater interest is his description of this battle written in prose. This document was found with the other papers relating to this period (except the verses). But it is impossible to say whether it was written soon after the engagement or some time later. Comparing the handwriting with Cornwallis's later MSS., one is led to suppose it was written soon after, as it is much more legible than subsequent documents.

It will be observed that not only does Cornwallis criticize Rodney for not following up his success, but takes him severely to task for not sailing early on the morning of the 9th. He took it for granted that he would, and slaved all night to get his ship ready to sail with the rest of the fleet.

It is recorded that Sir Charles Douglas (who was Captain of the Fleet to Rodney) was one of his most hostile critics. It is interesting, therefore, to note what Cornwallis says about him : but possibly Douglas did not wish to criticize his Admiral to a subordinate officer. There is no date on the document except April 12th, the date of the battle.

“After the Island of St. Christopher fell, Sir Sam: Hood went with His squadron to St. John’s road, but information having been received by Him of the arrival of S^r Geo: Rodney from England with a squadron they immediately join’d, and the whole proceeded to Gros Islet Bay ; then a large convoy arrived from England with great quantity of stores and provisions, and Line of Battle ships were continually coming from Home to join the fleet. The Admiral received intelligence of a French convoy with some Line of Battle Ships bound from France to Martinique, & He sail’d with a view to intercept them, but they arrived safe at their destination, and the English fleet return’d to their anchorage. Some time after some Negroes came from Martinique in a canoe & gave information that the French fleet with troops & convoy were about to sail, & even mentioned the day. Two English frigates the *Andromache* & *Endimion* were station’d it seem’d by the Admiral to watch and follow them, but not, as it appear’d, to come to Him with any information as to their sailing. A dinner was given at Gros Islet Island by Mr. Marr, a follower of Adm. Rodney, & whom I had known in that situation at Jamaica. It was a Mess of the surgeon of the Hospital—His Mates, & the clerks of the agent Victualler, Mr. Marr—Admiral Rodney, Gen. Mathew, R:A: Drake, Captn. Gardner, and myself, & there might have been one or two more but I do not recollect. As the dinner was near over the Captain of one of the frigates which had been watching the Enemy came to the Admiral, who was sitting at table, to inform Him that part of the French fleet had sail’d that morning, & that the remainder were ready to go out with the Loud wind, instead of being much pleased at the information, He asked Him how he dared to quit His Station, &

talk'd to Him in such a Style—that the clerks, doctors, mates at the Bottom of the table, thought it High time for them to go—and the captain was obliged to plead a sprung Bowsprit as an excuse for having brought Him the news that an inferior fleet clogged with a convoy, if He chose to sail immediately, would be in His power the next morning. The captain, who from the suddenness of the attack could not be ask'd to sit down by the master of the house, nor was He in any way treated like a Gentleman, went away—and the Admiral observing my astonishment and indignation—got up and coming over to me said, 'He is one of my own making, I never spare them by G——d.' Without entering at all into the matter, I said, 'You know Sir, the *Canada* has artificers on board from other ships—that we are heeling & caulking & coppering between wind and water'—'I shall sail in the morning,' was His answer, and I went on board—but as I did not believe he would wait until morning to sail from that open Bay we went to work immediately, & had the Launch hoisted in and all was ready in the middle watch. Some of the men who were at work on board the *Canada* belonging to other ships were sent for, and some remain'd, but there was no occasion to have been in such a hurry for tho' the Admiral sent some ships out, he suffer'd a punishment to go through the fleet in the morning [a man who had been sentenced by Court Martial was flogged round the fleet], and did not weigh till twelve O'clock, as the *Canada* had gone as far as she could up the Bay to get smooth water for heeling, & was within [inside of] the Admiral's Ship she did not weigh before the *Formidable*. The Ships that had sail'd before were repeating the signal from the *Andromache* which had follow'd the Enemy that their fleet was in sight, but the Admiral to make sure stood over towards Martinique, until He was inform'd again & again that there was not a ship of the enemy's there. He then made a signal for the Line of Battle abreast and having gone on with that for some time, we observ'd he Let reefs out & was preparing to rig out steering sail booms, & make sail which was done, but first He fired two guns from His bow chace—which in the general printed instructions in the article of Fighting, says—'when the Enemy are beaten & flying if the Admiral fires two guns from His bow chace, then every ship in the Fleet shall do His utmost to Lay the Enemy on board.' At this time the frigate which was following them could only be seen making

signals from the mast head of our ships. The wind had freshed very much, one of our ships had carried away a topmast, & it was getting Late in the evening. The Admiral shorten'd sail to his topsails, and made the signal for the *Canada*, *Prothée* & some frigates to keep ahead during the night. We made sail; the *Canada* with Her topsails reef'd and courses run at the rate of ten knots; early in the middle watch we plainly saw the French Admiral's Lights, but our fleet was not in sight, and the wind having lulled very much we shorten'd sail & put the ships head the other way until it was light, as several ships were then near us, & rather suspected we might be surrounded by the Enemy. When the day broke a French 74 was a little distance from the *Canada* & further from the fleet she belong'd to—the ship was immediately woke & every sail set to get up with Her. Every sail was also set on board the French ship to near their fleet, but the wind was very baffling, sometimes we had wind & she becalm'd, and afterwards she had wind & we becalm'd. The English fleet was also in sight & had a fresh wind, the *Canada* must have appeared to the Admiral much nearer the French ship than she was at any time, as a signal was made to Her to engage, but we never were within two gunshots, and at last she got a steady wind & was joining Her fleet fast, Sir Geo: Rodney made a signal for the Line of Battle & the *Canada* tack'd to get into Her Station—and very soon after she had done so the wind fell again from the ship a stern of us, the whole were becalm'd & as S^r Sam: Hood stood on S^r Geo: Rodney and half the English fleet were left hull down a stern. During this time an action took place between the French and Sir Sam: Hood, but those French ships to windward of His rear ships, & of the van of the centre squadron (which had been separated from the Admiral) kept to windward out of gun shot, and as a proof how little the enemy were inclined to fight, some single guns were fired from the *Canada* towards a French ship abreast of Her, upon their finding that the shot went but a little way & conceiving their powder to be better than ours, she bore up & ran down as far as they thought their shot would reach us, & ours not reach them—what came home did very little damage, and they certainly did not like to be so near us for they very soon made sail. The Ships with S^r Sam: Hood received some damage and Captain Bayne of the *Alfred* was killed—at length S^r Geo: Rodney with

the ships which had been becalm'd came up with a fresh wind, the French Fleet haul'd off—and there was an end of the action of the 9th of April. The English Fleet did not make sail after the Enemy, until the 11th when blowing fresh, the Enemy to windward, a signal was made to chace. The two French 64 gun ships which were afterwards taken by Sir Sam: Hood in the *Mona* passage falling to leeward at this time put into Guadalupe and did not join the fleet again—in the Evening of the 11th the *Agamemnon* & *Canada* were far to windward of the rest of the ships, & upon tacking looked up in the wake of the French fleet. We had not carried much sail either, indeed some of the officers on board the *Canada* had given me hints about the Reefs in the top sails—but one ship the *Warrior* had carried away Her main top mast, & I did not wish to risque disabling the ship in the presence of an Enemy—about sun set the Admiral shortened sail & made the signal for all cruisers, with the signal for the *Zebra* sloop's Captain—which sloop was sent immediately down to Jamaica probably from what I afterwards learnt to acquaint them that he was going there for the protection of that Island. The fleet stood under the top sails all night, and at break of day the 12th the Fleet of the Enemy were close to us. In the night, being in the narrow passage between the saints & Guadalupe, two of them had got on board each other [i.e. been in collision] & a Large two deck ship had Lost her Bowsprit & foremast, & was in tow of a frigate a very short distance to Leeward of our fleet. The Admiral made a signal for the second in command to send ships to Chace. Sir Sam: Hood made a signal for three of 74 guns & one of 64 guns, to chace—which ships the Admiral immediately recalled & the French frigate towed the disabled ship off unmolested—the Admiral then made the signal for the Line of Battle inverted, which put Rear Ad: Drake in the van and Sir Sam: Hood in the rear and Commodore Affleck in the sternmost ship of y^e centre instead of Leading it—for which he was commended in the Adml's dispatch. The French however had no time to form their Line, being so very close to us, & in y^e greatest confusion at day light, passing us sometimes five or six ships together at other times a single ship—and as they had six ships less than the English, and half of them not copper'd, if the advantage had been immediately follow'd up the greater part of them must have fallen early in the day without any material Loss

to the English.—In passing, six or seven of the Enemy's ships came very close to windward of the *Agamemnon* & *Duke*, the Admiral's second a head. The Admiral haul'd to windward of these ships & was not afterwards opposed to any others, which was at Home called "breaking the Line."—These French ships of course gladly kept away—and the Admiral had no more ships opposed to Him. If the *Formidable* had been kept close to y^e Hull of her second ahead as the Line was then form'd these ships must have passed the remainder of y^e English fleet very close to windward & of course been disabled. A ship at this time which proved to be the *Glorieux* came close to y^e *Canada* with Her masts tottering—she tried to get to Leeward to join the ships just mention'd, by passing a head of the *Canada*, to prevent which the *Canada* was kept away, & the Frenchman disappointed in His scheme came to the wind and passed as close as it was possible for two ships to pass without touching—she was fired into, but did not return a shot, nor was any person seen on board except one who Look'd out of a Lower deck port in the bow, and disappear'd, soon after she was clear of the *Canada* Her Bowsprit & all Her masts fell, she rolled Her Lower deck ports in y^e water, which caused the report of a ship having been sunk, & was eagerly caught at by the Admiral & put in His dispatch—but they were seen to lower the ports & she was taken in tow by the *Richmond* frigate, then in the French service, but she was forced (being in the middle of the English fleet) to cast Her off & she was taken possession of by some of our ships. The Adm: made the signal for the Van to tack and gain the wind of the Enemy, but the body of their fleet were to Leeward, & those which had passed to windward were most of them disabled. So much time was lost in this manner that the *Ville de Paris* & *Hector*, neither of which could hoist a top sail, had got to Leeward—and some French ships had got round their Admiral with an intent as it appear'd to take the *Ville de Paris* in Tow—the *Hector* being upon wood, a wood bottom could have no chance of escaping. The Admiral was at this time with very little way through the water upon the Larboard Quarter of the *Canada*, which ship with several others were standing towards the French Admiral. S^r Geo: Rodney at this time made the *Canada's* signal to near Him. Some delay was occasion'd to ascertain correctly the signal, which it was not very easy to understand as

nearing our Adm: was increasing our distance from y^e French. In the meantime being nearly within gunshot one was fired from the Lower deck at the greatest elevation—& then the signal was answer'd by the *Canada*, and sail shorten'd for a very short time.

“Those ships having left their Admiral, sail was immediately made again after the *Hector* and *Ville de Paris*. The former was fired into, but she only fired a few of her bow guns, and she hailed us to say she'd surrender'd, the signal was made from the *Canada* that she had not taken possession, & the Admiral made a signal to the next ship a stern to do so, that ship came up, fired into Her, killed the Captain, took possession & carried Her down to Jamaica—at which place it was proposed for y^e two ships to share the colours taken on board the *Hector*, but it was answer'd that there could be no credit in taking a ship which made no resistance for the guns which were fired from the bow of that ship, when the *Canada* was nearly alongside of Her, were fired too far a head to do any mischief. The *Ville de Paris* was a Little a head of the *Hector*, going before the wind with a fore sail & Lower steering sail set—Fore & main top sails down—appearing quite disabled having no other sail but the mizen top sail—and unable to make any more sail it seem'd to us on account of the disabled state of Her masts & rigging. Our Admiral was at this time abreast of the *Ville de Paris* rather before Her beam, but wide & far out of gun shot under Little or no sail with some ships about Him. The body of the French fleet far to Leeward of our ships, conceiving their Admiral past all hope of saving, were setting sail, rigging their booms out and appear'd to be going to make a run of it, but finding they were not pursued got into a Line running to Leeward & keeping close together. The *Cæsar* & *Ardent* having been disabled in passing were taken possession of by Sir Sam: Hood's squadron then in the rear but they were coming up with all sail set. The *Alert* Brig standing from the Admiral near the *Namur*, Capt: Fanshawe (of the *Namur*) ask'd the Captain if He had brought Him orders to make sail after the French fleet—upon which Capt: Vashon said he would go and ask, which He did, & returning said He might go a head of the Admiral. He ask'd again if he might follow the French. Capt. Vashon who very probably might not have received a very civil answer upon asking the first question said He could not return, but that, as the *Namur* must pass very close to y^e

Formidable in going on, He might Himself communicate & receive instructions—Captain Fanshawe accordingly asked as He passed if He might go on. The Admiral said ‘You may Lead me,’ the *Namur* passed with all Her sail out, but she was no sooner ahead of y^e Admiral than Her signal was made to shorten sail & she remain’d near the Adm. the rest of the day. Some of the ships kept after the French, who could make but Little way with Their foul and disabled ships—the *Canada* had only a fore sail gone, top sail and tops all out, with a mizen top sail set after passing the French ship in the morning—the main top mast was only kept from falling by a hauser having been passed round the head of it & the ends brought down to the chains—no sail could possibly be set upon it, yet she was up with the French fleet in the evening and one of Their Large ships with a flag, the third from the rear, haul’d out of the Line to fire at Her and did her considerable damage—but getting dark and the body of the English fleet far astern sail was taken in on board the *Canada*—the ship a great way a stern was seen at this time to blow up which afterwards prov’d to be the *Cæsar* French prize. The *Ville de Paris* before night struck to the *Barfleur*—she had sheer’d over from the *Canada* and others, wishing to surrender to a three decker & a flag, for Sir Sam: Hood declared that she Courted Him. If he had not stopped to take possession of the *Ville de Paris* it is probable He would have follow’d the French—as it was Commodore Affleck join’d us some little time after sail had been shorten’d on board the *Canada*. Orders were given to follow the Commodore’s motions, & in y^e morning five English ships were near Him—but neither the French nor English fleets were in sight. The *Canada* join’d Sir Geo Rodney in the night of the 13th, and in the morning of the 14th at seven o’clock I went on board the *Formidable*—I was received by S^r Chas. Douglas, who congratulated me upon the success of the preceding day, and, said He, without a blot! He told me that the Admiral had proposed to appoint me to the *Ville de Paris* & wish’d me to turn it over in my mind. I thought there was no occasion for that as I could give an immediate answer. I was introduced to the Admiral who was in His bed & nothing passed between us—Sir Ch: Douglas had introduced me to the Count de Grasse, &, as we were standing upon the Quarter deck, an alarm was given abaft of a shark being hooked, which

generally occasions no small confusion on board an English ship of war. We went directly aft to the Captains stern Gallery—and I was astonish'd to find the Count de Grasse enter into the spirit of this shark-catching with all the eagerness of any man or Boy in the ship ! calling out and advising the best method to get this *valuable prize* on board—without seeming to recollect or to feel, that but a few hours before He was in a French first-rate at the head of His fleet—and that at this time when He could be amused in so trifling a manner His great Ship was in our possession & He a miserable prisoner on board the English Admiral's Ship. He had however this consolation—as a public spirited man—that His new mess mate [Sir G. Rodney] had suffer'd nearly the whole of His fleet to escape. It was a curious circumstance that as soon as He had surrender'd to S^r Sam: Hood on y^e evg. of y^e 12th He went to bed ; what sort of a nights rest He had may be imagined, but it prevented Him from being carried on board the *Formidable* until the morning of the 13th. On board the *Formidable* I first heard that L^d Rob^t Manners had Lost a Leg, indeed some of the officers of the *Canada*, who had before had opportunities of observing His Lordships Zeal and desire to distinguish Himself upon such occasions, had expressed a wonder that His ship had not been in a conspicuous situation during the day, but it proved afterwards that the Admiral upon being inform'd of what had happen'd sent directions to the Lieutenant not to go near the Enemy. I immediately went on board the *Resolution* & found Him in very good spirits I thought with every prospect of doing well, but he Lamented the Idea of not being able to serve with one Leg. Afterwards I visited S^r Sam: Hood, who complain'd much of suffering the enemy's fleet to get away. He said He had been on board to press S^r Geo: Rodney either to follow Himself or to suffer Him to go with His division—but He could not prevail—& that the Admiral, to get rid of Him, said He was going to make sail, which however He did not do. The third day He allow'd Sir Sam: Hood to go a head with His division with orders not to go out of the sight of His signals. Sir Samuel however made all sail and did not stop until He got to the Mona passage, the only track to Cape Francois—but They had got through before He arrived there. He however there took two 64 gun ships, a frigate & sloop which had sail'd from Guadalupe upon finding the French fleet

were gone to Leeward. This I believe made a considerable change in Him, as I never afterwards heard Him say anything concerning the conduct of the fleet. Every thing was done to please Him as to promoting those connected with Him, and He was given the command at Port Royal, which was pleasing to an active mind like his, whilst the Admiral lived at a pen near Kingston. Tho' an accusation might have done no good, yet it was but a poor recompense to the country after all that had passed—for I do not suppose that such an opportunity ever offer'd of destroying so large a naval force, and particularly if it had been follow'd up at first as there could have been Little or no Loss on our part. I believe there never was a piece of success Less talk'd of by those concern'd. The trials of Keppel & Palliser, which had taken place the beginning of the War, had taught those most apt to talk upon such occasions to be silent—and perhaps in general it might be thought as well to let it pass as a signal Victory without a blot (as Sir Cha: Douglas observed), & to come in for the credit & reward received upon such occasions. Sir James Wallace was particularly attended to, and sent from Jamaica with Capt. Marshial & others upon a cruize which lasted three months, & He was then exchanged into a ship that had been long abroad, & more convenient to take Home (His Ship the *Warrior* being quite new), and He sail'd with the Admiral, but was left with the same party again to cruize off the Western Isles, where I believe some good prizes were taken. The Admiral never said anything to me of the Letter He had sent Home—until the return of His dispatches—when He read it to me, & upon that part which mention'd divine Providence He said, 'Aye thats for the bench of Bishops,' & seem'd delighted that He had so well deceived them all at Home.

"I am perfectly convinced that even Adm. Rodney thought of it as I did—and for that reason during the three months suspense at Jamaica until y^e return of His dispatches He was like a man that did not know whether He was to be rewarded or punish'd. I could think of nothing for a week after the 12th of April but what could be the motive of His forbearance having such an opportunity thrown in His way—not to take advantage of it! He had propos'd to L^d Hood, as His Lordship told me, when the French fleet were to windward between the Saintes & Guadalupe to go down to Jamaica—What said He—'You would

not go to Leeward & leave the French here !!!' Upon expressing my surprize to Com^{dore} Affleck a few days after that so little had been done with the Enemy's fleet in our power—He said that as Rodney had got the French Admiral He did not care much about the rest. I said the *Ville de Paris* might have been in our possession very early in the day as she was disabled in passing, which began before eight o'clock in the morning, if He would have suffer'd Captain Fanshawe to have gone when He ask'd permission so to do—or if He had not stopped the *Canada* by signal when getting within gun shot. S^r Fran. Drake with several ships in perfect condition were very near the *Canada* at the time under Top sails only, and no doubt were quite ready and anxious to go on if it had been thought proper so to do without orders. It was thought on board the *Canada* that under all circumstances we might go on Leaving it to the Admiral to stop us if He thought proper, and it appear'd very doubtful whether Adm: Rodney would have ventured to stop a flag officer with some good ships from attacking the disabled French Admiral with only half a dozen ships near Him.

"R^t Ad: Drake from under His hand, soon after it was over, payed some compliments to the zeal shewn on board the *Canada*—which he therefore must have approved—and consider'd Himself restrain'd for want of signal, but one would wish to err on the safe side and an action having taken place, whether Those ships in condition were not at Liberty to pursue their advantage (considering the confused broken state of the Enemy) without waiting for fresh orders."

In 1802 a memoir of Admiral Cornwallis (as he was then) appeared in the *Naval Chronicle*, and the proof of the article was evidently sent for him to correct; for he wrote to the Editor of that Journal [the draft of this letter is amongst his papers]. In this letter he epitomized all that appears in the account just read, but left out his criticism of Rodney and adds one or two pungent remarks on the subject which are worth giving. It is dated October 1801, and written from Newlands:—

SIR,—

You have very much obliged me by sending that number of the *Naval Chronicle* which I now return with thanks for the trouble you have taken. I have put two or three trifling mis-

takes or omissions down, but as to anything personal, whatever publications I have seen relating to Naval occurrences speak more favourably of me than I think I deserve.

I have not taken Notice of the 12th of April—nothing that I have ever seen has been truly stated as to what passed upon that occasion—but it is certainly not worth while now to revive that subject. It appeared to me that a few ships having fallen into our hands at that time made such an impression in England, where they had not been accusom'd to success for some Years, that notwithstanding L^d Cranston the bearer of the dispatches spoke (I have been told) pretty freely at the time yet the success carried all before it—and the true state of the fleet was not regarded or known as to numbers or condition—for half the French ships were not copper sheath'd and many had been Long abroad and were in a wretch'd state. . . .

The accident which had befallen some of the Enemy's ships the night before and brought them in the greatest confusion close to the English fleet at day Light on the Twelfth—appear'd to me an act of providence in favour of Our Country with which my mind has been frequently struck upon other occasions—and the best use (to speak in the most moderate terms) not having been made of it—I could not help thinking that as not one of Those French Ships were suffer'd to reach England, it seem'd to shew that we had not deserved them.

I had no prejudice to L^d Rodney who had always shewn me the greatest civility. I remember dining with him at my Father's, when He was going out upon the expedition to Martinique in 1760. He offered to take me with Him & I have no doubt He would have made me a post Captain within the Year—but my Father thought me too young, & wish'd me to continue in y^e *Dunkirk*. I served under Him in the *Guadalupe* at Jamaica. I resisted some things—but I had so Little reason to think ill of Him upon actual Service against an Enemy, that when he was returning to His Command in the West Indies in 1782 some of my Brother officers having spoken slightly of His conduct upon a particular occasion before He went Home—I said He appear'd to have had a full share in one action when the *Sandwich* suffer'd much, and therefore I should suspend my judgment until an opportunity happen'd for me to form an opinion, which was then likely to be very soon. He must at the time have seen what

I thought of His Conduct on the 12th of April but He never mention'd any thing to me upon the subject—and He appear'd during the three months until the return of His dispatches like a man who did not know whether He was to be rewarded or punish'd, for I am perfectly convinced He was exactly of my opinion as to y^e management of our fleet on that day. The West India Merchants, I have been told, gave a dinner annually to y^e officers upon the occasion, & I recollect L^d Hood having pressed me very much to go—saying that Admiral Goodall and others came up to Town on purpose—how They could Look one another in the face whilst at the feast without Laughing must be very surprizing—L^d Hood said once to me that I would not go because I did not think all had been done that might have been. It was not possible there could be two opinions upon it. If it was a matter of opinion, & that I could think mine better than others, I must be vain indeed!

He put me in mind that I had gone to one feast in the City which related to it. It was upon His taking up His Freedom in the Iron Mongers Company, but I did that out of respect to Him—of whom I had the highest opinions and whose conduct when I served under Him I very much admired—and who if He had commanded the fleet on the 12th of April would I have no doubt taken at least twenty five sail of the Enemy.

Lord Rodney appear'd not to think He could by any favour make me say what I did not think of His conduct upon that day for He never offer'd to bribe me, unless His proposing that I should have removed into the *Ville de Paris* could be consider'd in that Light. And perhaps it was as well to Let it pass as a great Victory gain'd on that twelfth of April 1782—for whatever might have been left undone on that day—the Navy of England has made ample amends for since.

Cornwallis refused Rodney's offer of the *Ville de Paris*, and it was fortunate for him he did, as she foundered in a storm on her way to England later in the year.

Although the following letter from Nelson was written many years later, when Cornwallis was blockading Brest, it is given now, as so much of it refers to what has been written about in this and previous chapters. It shows clearly what Nelson thought of Rodney, when he writes of “the greatest victory our

Country ever saw," but "damns with faint praise" when he says "if it had been followed up." When he mentions Cornwallis having saved his life he refers to the occasion when the former brought him home in the *Lion* :—

"VICTORY," Dec. 30th, 1804.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

I always feel happy in hearing from you, for I never never shall forget that to you probably I owe my life, and I feel that I imbibed from you certain sentiments which have greatly assisted me in my Naval career—That we could always beat a Frenchman if we fought him long enough ; that the difficulty of getting at them was oftentimes more people's own fancy than from the difficulty of the undertaking ; that people did not know what they could do until they tried, and that it was always to err on the right side to fight.

I was then at that time of life to make the impression which has never been shaken. But, on the score of fighting, I believe, my dear friend, that you have had your full share, and in obtaining the greatest victory, if it had been followed up, that our Country ever saw.

I own I should like to see you with the Brest fleet well clear of the land, and from my heart I hope that will happen. There is not, my dear friend, that man breathing, who would rejoice more than your most attached and affectionate friend,

NELSON AND BRONTE.

CHAPTER IX

1782

CORNWALLIS'S thanks to his own Ship's Company for their behaviour in the two engagements are worthy of record; they are taken from the *Canada's* order book and are dated "*Canada at Sea. May 18th, 1782*" :—

"Captain Cornwallis takes this opportunity of expressing his thorough sense of the Spirited behaviour of the Officers, Seamen and Marines of the *Canada* on both Actions, at St. Cristophe (i.e. St. Kitts) and on the 12th of April last, and to thank them for the cheerful perseverance with which they went through that long day so much to their credit and honour. And he assures them that it will always give him particular pleasure to meet an enemy, whilst he has the honour to command those Brave men."

Before news of Rodney's victory reached England, Cornwallis received a letter from each of his brothers. The first from the Bishop shows the state of despondency to which the country had sunk :—

"The last Ministry have brought this country to the last stage of misery and despair. The present set out well, and I hope will exhibit the rare instance of honesty in power. Nothing but the united efforts of the good and great can save this country. We have done well in naval matters, since the change in the Admiralty. Barrington has been very successful, and a few Captains will get great wealth. Your name stands very high, I assure you, and I hope you will soon be rewarded as you ought."

The second is from Earl Cornwallis, who was at the time a prisoner of war on parole in England. Cornwallis had again been returned for Eye after the last General Election; considering how he hated politics his brother's exhortations are amusing :—

"I wrote to you by the last packet to inform you of your

being chose for Eye, and to request in the strongest manner that you would never look to my conduct in the political line, but act entirely for yourself, and consider yourself, as you really are, as independent as any member in the House of Commons. I likewise repeat, in case my former letter should have been mis-carried, my warmest congratulations on the distinguished figure which you made in the action off St. Kitts. I have now a prospect of being speedily exchanged, and if any service offers, of being employed, as there are few of our Generals who wish to quit their easy chairs, unless it is to command an English camp.”

Whatever may have been the opinion of his subordinates, Rodney’s victory put new heart into the British nation. Cornwallis’s old mother, prouder of her son than ever, wrote :—

“ Your victory has been paid great honour, to hear guns firing, lighting up houses, et cetera : if everybody had been as silent as yourself, the great share you had in it would still have been a secret. However, I was early made happy by your brothers being informed by Mr. Stephens very soon after the arrival of the news of your safety, and the having most honourably distinguished yourself ; this was his note. Mrs. Leveson, a few hours afterwards, sent me a paragraph out of a letter which she had read, with very glorious particulars of your behaviour. When I shewed it to Mrs Cornwallis, she said my Lord Lisburn had brought a letter to Lambeth, that still raised your behaviour higher, which I thought impossible. The newspapers have contributed their parts very amply in doing you justice. When your brother brought me Stephens’ note, tears of joy came into his eyes. He has appeared to me to feel this happy event full as much as I did. I had, very soon after the news came, a card from Lady Howe, of congratulations for your safety, to which was added the strongest applause for the gallantry of your conduct. The Bishop of Lichfield was at the levée the Friday after the news came. His Majesty made your praise the subject of his conversation to him. The Bishop of Lichfield saw Captain Biron at the levée, who spoke of your behaviour in the highest terms, and I am told Rodney in his private letters has been very lavish in your praise. Most certainly no one can stand higher in the opinion of all people in your profession than you do, which is a great happiness to me, but why would you not accept the Admiral’s offer of the *Ville de Paris* ? By all the accounts we

have had here you had a very considerable share in the taking of her; the coming home in her would have been an eclat, and what is more material to me, I should have had the comfort of seeing you soon, as she will be sent home I imagine in a few months. Perhaps that would have been an objection to you; if so I withdraw my wishes, for they are always governed by what you like. Myself is always out of the question where you are concerned, and I should be more happy with your being in the West Indies than nearer me, did I know that it was your own choice."

This is the last letter in existence to Cornwallis from his mother. Truly it can be said of them, that each one is an example of the purest maternal devotion. It is not surprising that until the day of his death he used to speak of her with the tenderest affection. She died shortly after, and was at this time in failing health.

The next he received, written a day later, was from Earl Cornwallis: and a very charming letter it is. The affection that existed between the brothers is much to be admired:—

"I most heartily congratulate you on the glorious victory of the 12th of April, and on the very conspicuous share which all the world acknowledges you had in the honour of that memorable day. It has been the greatest victory since Tourville's [defeat] and I hope has saved us from the jaws of a most humiliating and ignominious peace. The loss of poor Lord Robert Manners gave me the most sincere concern; he seemed determined to walk in your steps, and it is in vain that we have ships and seamen when we want officers.

"I have now a thing to mention to you in regard to myself, which is a secret to everybody except my brother James. There is great reason to hope that my exchange may be immediately managed, and if that should be the case, it is however doubtful, I am to be Governor and Commander-in-Chief in India. The military part of the prospect is not brilliant, but what field is now open in this war to a soldier? My appointments will be great, and, without deviating from the strictest honour, I must have it in my power to put my children in a better situation. If you was to come home, I think it not impossible but that I might be able to procure the offer of the naval command for you in that part of the world. I have, however, no authority for this opinion, but

my general idea that those who would think me proper to be placed in so delicate and responsible a situation, would wish to give me every means of carrying on the service to advantage. If this either should not be the case, or that the service should not be agreeable to you, I think there can be no great objection to your coming home. Your reputation is now so high in your profession that I think with any Admiralty you might choose your ship and station, and with the present you might probably get some command. All this, however, I still submit to your judgment, which in what concerns your profession must be better than mine. There are three points doubtful—1st, whether I go to India; 2nd, whether I can procure for you the offer of the naval command; and 3rdly, whether you would like it, and whether you would not think our both taking a probably last leave of my mother would not be too severe a stroke to inflict on her; and then you are to consider whether the West India station is likely to be more eligible for you than the Home station, with Keppel at the head of the Admiralty and Lord Howe commanding the squadron. You will not, of course, mention a word about India. My mother has been wonderfully well this winter; she had now a cold that has attacked everybody, but is recovering. I hardly know a house in town in which two-thirds of the inhabitants are not sick.”

The Bishop of Lichfield also wrote on the same day:—

“We have again to congratulate you upon the conspicuous share that the *Canada* had in our last glorious victory. The King on Friday spoke very highly of your conduct, and to-day his first Minister, Lord Rockingham, was as strong in his commendations of you to me. Fame, I know, is your first object, and you have happily obtained as full a portion as you could have wished of it. We have had four hours’ conversation upon this subject in the House of Lords to-day. Lord Sandwich wanted to make Rodney an Earl, or at least a Viscount, and to settle £2,000 per annum upon the title. Lord Keppel did very well and supported his arguments exceedingly well. Hood will certainly at least be an Irish peer; all sides were very loud in praises of him.”

His aunt, the wife of the Archbishop, also wrote to congratulate her nephew. The last paragraph of her letter strikes one as a very human touch:—

“The Archbishop would have wrote to you himself, but has

got a slight touch of the gout, just enough I hope to be wholesome for him, as it is in a very regular way, and he is otherwise perfectly well. He desires his kindest love to you."

If his brother's last letter had given Cornwallis any hopes of being appointed to command the East India Squadron, he was doomed to disappointment, as he hears again on July 3rd :—

"I have written several letters to you, in confidence, relative to my going as Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief to the East Indies ; that event seem now more probable than it did, but I fear the naval command is out of the question, as Keppel insists on an Admiral, and has named old Parker. Lord Shelburne will, I am sure, exert himself to procure you a broad pennant as second in command, but, as the new Ministers do not always draw together, I can not answer for the Admiralty. Keppel, however, joins with all the world in doing you justice and speaking of you in the handsomest manner. I have already stated the case fully to you, but for fear of accidents I will repeat that your character is now so high that you cannot be hurt by coming home if you like it, that there is a possibility of your going to India in an agreeable manner, and that otherwise you may choose your ship and station, let who will be at the head of the Admiralty. Jervis spoke of you in the highest terms to Lord Shelburne, and said that it would be a disgrace to the Administration if you did not receive some distinguished mark of favour."

After refitting at Jamaica, Cornwallis's ship was ordered to form part of a squadron under Rear-Admiral Graves, to convoy a large fleet of merchantmen and prizes of war home. A violent hurricane was encountered, and many ships of war (including the before-mentioned *Ville de Paris*) and merchant vessels foundered. The *Canada* was fortunate, and arrived at Portsmouth in October. She was paid off the same month.

Although he had only been home a few days, Cornwallis was not satisfied to remain unemployed. Peace was not far distant, but England was still at war with France and her allies, and he was evidently much annoyed at being placed immediately on half-pay, as he wrote at once to Lord Keppel, who was now First Lord :—

"The Officer who fills the High post at present possest by Your Lordship may probably have opportunities of sometimes

stating the situation of sea officers to the King. His Majesty has sometimes done me the Honor to appear by His gracious expressions to suppose me zealously attached to the Naval Service.

“I am conscious I feel the same duty to His Majesty and ardent desire to contribute as far as my poor ability will go to the success of His Arms which hath ever actuated me. I have very great reason to complain of neglect and ill treatment from Your Lordship, but I trust you will do me the justice to remember that I went abroad when my ship was ordered, and that I neither Quitted Her there nor at Home, and was therefore no ways accessory to my present Situation.

“After reminding Your Lordship of these particulars I flatter myself You will not represent me to have gone upon half pay from inclination.”

He received an answer by return, saying :—

“I am favoured with your note, and shall be at your commands to-morrow at twelve o’clock.

“The intimation in your note relative to your feeling neglected since your return to England, I could not read without a degree of an uneasiness lest what you say is directed to me personally. It is not from every officer I should feel as I must ever do towards you, for, believe me, I have without deviation constantly considered you amongst those I wished most sincerely well to, and whose good opinion I much coveted. Your services and peculiar merits in the full execution of them needs no comment and praise from me ; the whole fleet have universally given the strongest testimony to the world of it.”

As a member of an old Whig family (apart from his meritorious service), Cornwallis must have felt aggrieved that he was not employed, for he writes a month later, and again pesters the First Lord :—

“I do not mean to draw Your Lordship into a correspondence but as you have said it was necessary to dismantle the *Canada*, I must beg Leave to intrude upon Your Lordship to observe, that if she had been examined I do not know that she might not have been found with small repairs as fit for Home Service as the *Foudroyant*, *Courageux*, or perhaps some other old ships. But the *Canada* was ordered to be paid off & the petty officers & men turn’d over to other ship before she arrived at Spithead from St. Helens. If Your Lordship really entertains the very flattering

opinion you have been pleased to express of me, some reluctance at least might have been shewn in turning me & every one belonging to me adrift. Your Lordship may very well remember these kind of rewards were not given for services in the Last war. But if Your Lordship treated me in this manner unintentionally it would have been natural to suppose that you would with pleasure have seized the first opportunity to have endeavoured in some Measure to make me amends by offering me the first desirable ship that was vacant. I have been informed that soon after I came to town a brand new ship the *Bombay Castle* was given to Capt^a Pourmaster lately principal agent of transports in America. I mention but one instance, other Capt^{ns} when tired of their ships have had choice of new ones ; from this it should seem that although Your Lordship is pleased to acknowledge my service it is not the kind of service Your Lordship has thought worth your attention."

Considering the difference between their positions and the tone of his letter, Keppel's reply appears highly polite :—

"I am favoured with your letter of this day, and cannot help in my reply assuring you of my concern at your still conceiving me to have treated you improperly. I stated myself when you called at the Admiralty without reserve, and I hoped so as to have been credited, that I had not intentionally wished to have shewed neglect towards you. The bad condition of the *Canada* required her being dismantled ; and I am ready to own your constant and excellent services gives you, in justice, claim to the attention of every First Lord of the Admiralty less acquainted with you than I have been, [or] at least have considered myself ; much more should it be my duty and will be to shew you, when in my power, the value I set upon your merits. Your friendship and good opinion I must ever wish, consistent with my character as a public and private man. My regard to truth, as well as esteem for your merits, will never permit me to mis-state you anywhere, but most especially if questioned by His Majesty at any time upon the subject of your being at present upon half pay.

"I cannot close my letter without venturing a thought, which is that some enemy of mine has used pains with you to create in your mind the opinion of my intentional neglect towards you. It is a matter which will ever be a concern to me."

However, Cornwallis received a Christmas present from the

Admiralty, as he was appointed to command the *Foudroyant* on December 26th :—

“ Captain Sir John Jervis is likely to be employed immediately upon a particular service, which will most probably occasion the *Foudroyant* at Plymouth to become vacant. . . . Having stated the particulars of the *Foudroyant*, I cannot think of offering the command to any officer till I know your inclinations. Whatever they are, I shall wish to show you my readiness in being as useful as my power may permit.”

CHAPTER X

1783-1789

ALTHOUGH Viscount Keppel wrote again on the 30th, telling Cornwallis "he will give directions for the drawing up of his commission as Captain of the *Foudroyant*," Cornwallis never actually took command of her, as on January 6th the following year he hears again from Keppel, telling him that he "much fears poor Charles Fielding cannot live long, in which case the *Ganges* will be vacant."

In this letter he is requested to visit the First Lord at the Admiralty. Apart from what his brother wrote him six months previously, there could have been no question of Cornwallis going out in command of the East India Station at this date, as Earl Cornwallis himself was not appointed Governor-General until three years later, in 1786. Shortly afterwards he was given command of the *Ganges*. He was not, however, destined to see active service in her, as, on January 20th of this year, preliminaries of peace were signed with France and Spain.

Thus ended one of the most disastrous wars Great Britain had ever engaged in. Not only had she lost for ever her American Colonies, with the exception of Canada, but many of the advantages she had gained by the treaty of peace signed in 1763 at the conclusion of the last war with France.

Cornwallis did not command the *Ganges* for long, as, three months later, he was appointed to the royal yacht *Queen Charlotte*.

Lord North was again in power with the assistance of the party controlled by Fox: a coalition which Pitt referred to as "an unholy and ill-omened marriage." The King disliked his Ministers as much as Pitt, so much so that, when he dissolved Parliament in December of this year, he refused to accept their seals of office from either Fox or North in person, but insisted on the formality being carried out by their under-secretaries.

Mention of this is made as assuming His Majesty had something to say in the matter as to who was to command his yacht, it is rather surprising that Cornwallis (who was if anything at that time a Whig) was given her. It only goes to show that, whatever may have been the custom of the time, the King refused to look upon certain appointments as political. He recognized that Cornwallis was one of the coming men in his Navy, had done extraordinarily well in the late war and rewarded him accordingly; instead of allowing him to go on half-pay, as was the fate of so many of his contemporaries now that the country was at peace.

After nearly thirty years of vigorous service it may be justly said that Cornwallis was entitled to the comparative ease which his new command gave him.

Up to now, since 1763, he had been Member for Eye, and it will be remembered that, in a letter written some two years before, his eldest brother had touched on the subject of politics, and suggested that he (Cornwallis) should interest himself in them. Whether it was due to home influence or pressure brought to bear upon him by Howe and others it is not possible to say, but he was persuaded to allow himself to be adopted as a candidate for Portsmouth at the general election in March of the following year (1784).

This constituency was in those days looked upon more or less as a "Service seat," and no doubt it was for this reason that Cornwallis was nominated. But it is curious that, despite the friendship which had always existed between his family and Fox, and the Whig party generally, he should have stood as a "Pitt" candidate. Possibly as a non-party man the unnatural coalition between Fox and North was as odious to him as it was to the majority of the electors, who showed their true feelings when they returned Pitt with a large majority in the House of Commons, and turned out the Coalition with a loss of 160 seats.

It was important for a naval candidate that he should obtain all the assistance he could get from the Service. Howe, the new First Lord, was naturally anxious for Cornwallis's success at the poll, and did all he could to help him. The day before the election he wrote to him from the Admiralty:—

"I am now enabled to inform you of everything that could be done in conformity to your intimation of the opposition said

to be intended against you last night. Lord Hood, I acquainted you before, is engaged by the commencement of his own poll to-morrow. Lord Barrington writes by this post to let you know why he is prevented from being present at yours, and Admiral Rowley is confined to his bed by a feverish complaint. But Major Varlo set out for Portsmouth to-day, and he assures me he shall be able to engage 10 or 12 votes. I shall be glad to know hereafter how far he may be able to succeed in that expectation, as it is desirable to know the extent of the obligations we may be under to our different friends. Mr. Rickman sets out this evening, and lies upon the road to be down in time for you to-morrow morning. Mr. William White called upon me this morning to acquaint me he would begin his journey also to-day, but expressed indecision on the part he should take at the election, though he by no means expressed himself in hostile terms. I believe he waits to see what part the Messrs. Carter take [Carter was at this date Mayor of Portsmouth and controlled a number of votes], to regulate his own conduct by their example if a third candidate should start at the post. I hear Mr. Erskine is in town to-day, but whether in view to go off also this evening to offer when the poll opens, I have not been able to find out."

Cornwallis was returned, defeating the Hon. Thomas Erskine, whom he was destined to meet eleven years later under very different circumstances.

The new Member for Portsmouth took his seat. There is, however, no record of the number of his attendances, or of his ever having spoken in the House even on naval matters.

His co-member was Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh, whose only indirect connection with the Navy was the fact that he is supposed to be the first man who led Emma, Lady Hamilton, from the path of virtue!

From the point of view of the biographer, the years 1783-7 are lean. They form a gap in the life of Cornwallis which it is not possible to fill. Probably nothing of moment happened to him. Beyond one or two private letters, and some uninteresting and purely routine correspondence with the Admiralty, there is no material available.

Nelson was at this date (1784) commanding the *Boreas* on the West India Station and making himself exceedingly unpopular with the Colonists by endeavouring to enforce the

Navigation Acts. He was evidently bored to extinction, and wrote to his old friend from there on October 25th :—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

By the *Zebra* sloop of war who sails for England to-morrow, I can't help asking how you do, and to shew that I am alive. This place during the hurricane months has been hotter than I ever felt in this country. Poor Jamaica, what a sad calamity ; I wish any vessel was going from this place that I might send something to poor Cuba, for provisions are in great plenty here, and I suppose very dear at Kingston. As to this station I dislike it as much as ever. The Admiral I shall say nothing about ; his Captain's name is Kelly, was Gardner's first Lieutenant in the *Sultan*, an ignorant self-sufficient man ; the others are ignoramus's except Collingwood, who is a very good officer and an amiable character, but unfortunately he has been at Grenada during the hurricane months, therefore I can have no wish to remain upon this station, for the Commissioner I hear is to be recalled, and then I shall lose my only female friend in these islands (Mrs. Moutray). You know her, and I think her a very amiable woman ; there [their ?] house has been open to me, with a bedchamber, during my broil at this place. Lady Hughes I detest, but, after all, in my ship I am very comfortable, very good officers are the Lieutenants. Apropos, young Beale, the gunner's son, is on board ; he behaves vastly well. I say this as you may wish if he deserves it to do something for him ; he is a very attentive, sober young man as can possibly be. I have sent a small cask of haddocks, which I hope you [will] accept from your faithful, affectionate friend,

HORATIO NELSON.

In 1785 Cornwallis was again seriously troubled with his eyes, possibly it was gout, but, judging by a letter from Howe, it does not appear to have been caused by over-indulgence. Writing in November 1785 the latter says :—

“I am sorry to hear from Mr. Leveson that you are a fellow sufferer with me.

“I flatter myself I have not frequently trespassed against the rules of temperance, but when you, who are the pattern of self-

denial, don't escape this tax upon luxury, I am taught to bear my lot with greater patience."

The year 1786 is a complete blank so far as letters and documents of interest. There are a few communications with the Admiralty—all routine. In 1787 Cornwallis gave up the command of the royal yacht, and was appointed to the *Robust*. In September of this year he received a notification from Howe, who was still First Lord, that the King had appointed him Colonel of Marines at Plymouth.

It seems certain that Cornwallis had been told some time before by those in authority that the command of the East Indies Station would be offered him when opportunity arose. The following letter suggests that he had written to his brother to consult him on the matter:—

CALCUTTA, *March 7, 1788.*

DEAR WILLIAM,—

The *Ranger* packet arrived at last after a most tedious passage, and brought me your letters of the 1st and 21st and of 26th July. By a letter which I received overland from Mr. Pitt dated the 8th September, I find that affairs in England were in a very critical state, and I think it very possible you may now be off the Cape with a good squadron.

Administration seems to have acted in this business with the greatest ability, and to have taken advantage of the weakness of our rivals to talk the language of a great nation, and to reassume the importance which Britain used to hold in the politics of Europe. Much as I wish for peace I cannot resist the feelings of an Englishman on seeing my country rise from the late humiliating situation. If a war should take place you will easily conceive that I should be glad to see you commanding the Fleet in this country: yet you have a right to chuse for yourself, and if you prefer any other station I must insist upon it that you will not be influenced by my being here.

I have been quite in a fever at the Bishop's hesitating about buying Sir C. Kent's estate, because there is an house upon it. That is the very reason that I would give the more for it. I live much cheaper here than I expected, and if I stay here till the end of 1790 according to my engagement, I shall have at least £80,000 in this country. How provoking would it be with the

command of so much money to lose such an estate from the family. If it is not too late, for God's sake urge him to get it at any price.

I am, my dear William, with most earnest wishes for your health, happiness, and honour whether in peace or war, your most truly affectionate brother,

CORNWALLIS.

Although Cornwallis may not have been a regular attendant in the House of Commons, he evidently had some scruples about continuing as Member of Parliament for an important borough like Portsmouth, when he was on the point of going on foreign service. He wrote and asked his eldest brother's advice, who answered :—

“ In regard to Portsmouth you must judge for yourself, there is no advising you about it, but I own I should be very sorry that you should decline Parliament altogether.”

He evidently thought that as a representative for a “ pocket ” borough like Eye it didn't matter in the least whether his brother William attended or not ; for he goes on to say :—

“ Eye is entirely at your service, and need be no restraint upon you in point of attendance or any other consideration.”

Cornwallis took his brother's hint. He did not seek re-election as Member for Portsmouth at the dissolution of Parliament in 1790, but was, however, returned as member for Eye. The following was addressed by him to the Mayor of Portsmouth immediately before sailing for the East.

SIR,—

When I received the distinguished Honour of being Elected to represent this Borough in Parliament, I expressed a wish upon any important occasion to know the Sentiments of my constituents, no difference of opinion having to my Knowledge prevail'd, I have reason to flatter myself that my Humble endeavours to serve Them have not been wholly unacceptable. To desire to continue in that very Honourable situation when I am going to a distant part of the world and thereby deprive them of a representative is incompatible with the sentiments of gratitude I feel for the very great and distinguished marks of favour with which They have Honour'd me. That prosperity may for

ever attend the Corporation of Portsmouth will be always my sincere and hearty wish.

In the summer of this year (1788) Cornwallis was offered and accepted the appointment of Commodore and Commander-in-Chief of H.M. Squadron in the East Indies. The fact became generally known, and one of the first to apply to serve under him was his old friend Nelson, who, lately married, was on half-pay and living in Norfolk :—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

Although I am set down here in a country life (and although happily married), yet I always shall, as I have ever done, be ready to step forth whenever service requires or my friends may wish me to serve. Fame says you are going out with a command. If in either actual service, or a wish of yours to accept of me under your command who reveres and esteems you, I am ready and willing to go forth, and, by a strict adherence to your orders as my superior and wishes as my friend, prove myself worthy of the friendship you have honoured me with, for indeed I am, with great truth, your sincere and affectionate,

HORATIO NELSON.

Cornwallis knew that Nelson had only recently married and for this reason had not suggested his name to the Admiralty. For he writes :—

I am sure it would have given me the greatest pleasure to have had you on one of my ships, and I remember'd you were once partial to that part of the world to which I am said to be going : but your fire-side is so totally changed since that time, that I dared not venture to name you, and the matter was kept a secret until long after the officers were named. But if anything should happen to occasion more ships coming out ; nothing could give me greater pleasure than to have the happiness of seeing you in one of them.

Most truly and affectionately yours,

W. CORNWALLIS.

[Added MSS. Brit. Mus.]

Nelson was evidently a little piqued, for he answers this a few days later :—

I received your kind letter on Saturday, and was sorry to think that you could suppose any situation in life could ever diminish the ardour (I trust it has been always conspicuous), I have to serve my country (although I am as happy in domestic life as any person can be). My wish has been (for I may now say a series of years) to serve under you. However I trust you have selected officers who will do credit to your choice more able ones I am sensible are easily met with, but one more attached or affectionate than myself I will not so readily yield to. Such things has been that officers have not liked to go to India, although I have no doubt but your penetration is too good to have made a choice where such a thing could happen. But should any event take place which should increase the number of ships, or prevent any of your present choice from going, and none presenting themselves who you will wisely prefer to your rural friend, always recollect that I can leave my humble and peaceful cottage, and believe me as ever your faithful and affectionate,

HORATIO NELSON.

Cornwallis received several interesting letters before he actually sailed, but the following from his brother, the Governor-General, must have been sent after him as it is dated January 1789, and letters from India took many months to come in those days.

Earl Cornwallis had heard that his old friend Lord Howe had quarrelled with Pitt and had resigned office as First Lord, and was evidently much concerned, for he writes :—

“The accounts you give of politics is by no means pleasing, and from every consideration, both public and private, I feel the most sincere concern at Lord Howe’s going out. Bathurst’s voting against him has hurt me exceedingly, but it is one of those plagues that a man must make up his mind to.”

He also warns his brother against quacks, saying :—

“I am very sorry to hear that you have returns of the complaint in your eyes ; for God’s sake beware of quacks, it is too serious a stake to trifle with the eyesight. I think it is a gouty humour.”

India was evidently a gold mine to her rulers, for in this letter he again mentions how "with the utmost propriety of living my savings are vastly beyond my expectations, and by the 1st of January, 1790, will exceed £90,000."

Amongst other letters he received was one from the Marquis of Lansdowne, who, as the Earl of Shelburne, had been Prime Minister in 1782. He wrote from Salham, near Plymouth :—

I am here on account of Lady Lansdown's Health, which prevents my having the pleasure of seeing you before your departure, and wishing you every possible success and satisfaction in your command. I beg you will make Lady Lansdown's and my best Compliments to your Brother. I would write to him, if I could give him any Information worth the trouble of a letter. It appears to me a matter of the utmost uncertainty what may turn up as to our Publick Affairs. There is no forming any Judgement for or against the King's Recovery, and as to Partys you have seen them later than I have done. I wish we may not count too much upon the appearance of distraction in France. I do not conceive that the Clergy and the nobility can made a stand in any Country in Europe against the King and People united, particularly in France, where these classes are far from unanimous, and too much civiliz'd to have recourse to violent measures. It might have been different in feudal times.

I am, with particular Esteem and Regard, Sir,

Your Faithfull, Humble Serv.,

LANSDOWN.

[It is curious to note that the First Marquis spelt his name without an "e"].

Another letter from his old friend Lord Hood, who was now First Sea Lord, says :—

"Should the wind come favourable to your wishes soon, this probably will be the last opportunity a letter will have the chance of finding you at Spithead. I therefore once more trouble you with my best wishes for your health and a happy voyage."

After mentioning one or two routine matters, he goes on to say :—

“Poor Schomberg is happy beyond expression.”

The Captain Schomberg referred to in this letter commanded H.M. ship *Atalanta*, which formed part of the squadron under Cornwallis. That Lord Hood should say that he was “happy beyond expression, and that he had the fullest confidence that he would conduct himself in the fullest conformity to the Commodore’s wishes in every respect,” would suggest that this officer had already been in trouble with his superiors. As subsequent events proved, Lord Hood was wrong, as “poor Schomberg” was sent home in disgrace for an act of foolishness, and was lucky not to have been tried by court-martial.

THIRD PHASE

1789—1793

FROM COMMODORE TO REAR-ADMIRAL

IN COMMAND OF EAST INDIA SQUADRON
WAR WITH FRANCE RENEWED

CHAPTER I

1789

CORNWALLIS's commission appointing him to command the East India Squadron was dated November 11th, 1788. It gave the exact route to be taken and places where he had to touch, and dealt especially with suggested economies as to victualling, without giving any definite instructions as to how these were to be arrived at. It gave him besides the usual powers of a Commander-in-Chief on a Foreign Station.

One point strikes one as being particularly curious. It states the exact amount that the East India Company contracted to pay the Government for the upkeep of a British regiment of the King's army in India. The establishment of each was 1,000 men. The amounts thus provided were two lakhs of rupees per annum. It then goes on to state, that as this amount was not actually expended in the upkeep of each regiment, any surplus was to be collected from one William Burke, who was the Deputy-Paymaster-General in India, and paid to the Commodore, who was to apply it "towards defraying the expense of purchasing such stores and provisions as the Squadron in your command may stand in need of, when the supplies sent from England, or furnished by the East India Company shall prove deficient, as well as towards defraying other necessary expenses of the said Squadron." One wonders whether the Governor and Court of the East India Company realized that they were paying more to the Home Government per regiment than was the actual cost of its upkeep.

Another document of a secret nature was sent to the Commodore just before he started. It was connected with instructions as to a general survey of coasts, with special reference to the East Coast of the peninsula, the Andaman Islands, and part of the Malay Peninsula. The trade between India and the East

was increasing, and the Dutch Settlements were already numerous in the Malay Archipelago. The Dutch, however, were doing their utmost to prevent any encroachment upon their trading monopoly which might be attempted by the English in these seas. This matter was evidently considered of the greatest importance, as a few days before he sailed, Cornwallis received a private letter on the subject from Lord Chatham, who had succeeded Howe as First Lord. In it he is told that "The Board of Controul have urged so strongly their wish that the *Ariel* Sloop might proceed without further delay on the service for which she was intended that it has been determined to put her under your orders." It goes on to acquaint him that a Mr. Moorsom, an expert surveyor, had been appointed to command her, and that additional instructions of a secret nature were being sent him. Chatham also asked him to look after a Mr. Newman, "a distant relation of mine and for whom I am much interested," and concluded wishing him "good health and success."

Cornwallis flew his broad pennant on the *Crown*; among his many requisitions for his squadron was a quantity of sour-crout, which, however, did not arrive in time. He was also careful to apply for his own perquisites, including a supply of salted tongues. He sailed from Portsmouth on February 3rd, but owing to adverse winds was delayed at Spithead until the 9th.

He arrived at Madeira on February 28th, and Teneriffe the 15th March, from which place he writes a letter to the Admiralty complaining of the very bad weather that he had experienced during the whole of his voyage. He arrived at Rio de Janeiro three months later, where another letter is written to the Admiralty from which it would appear that a British squadron in a foreign port was considered a desirable object to bleed to the fullest extent. He said:—

GENTLEMEN,—

Having drawn upon your Board a set of bills of exchange for this date in favour of Luiz Antonio Tinoco da Silva for £1,700 2. 4. for refreshments and wine purchased for the use of H.M. Squadron under my command, I beg leave to enclose you the Account and have to observe that the great progress of the Scurvy among most of the Seamen, and others being more or less afflicted with that Malady, made such demands highly neces-

sary. The 50 Pipes of Wine were also wanting to carry the ships on to Madras. I thought it also advisable to take as many live bullocks on board as the ships could conveniently receive. I have been at great pains to secure each Article on the cheapest terms. The 10 % added to the bill appeared to me so extravagant a charge that I complained of it to the Vice-roy, and received for answer that it was a customary demand, and therefore I was under necessity of complying with it or otherwise I could not have obtained the necessary supplies.

The Portuguese gentleman in question appears to have been the British Agent, and evidently the Commodore wrote a private letter expostulating against this outrageous demand to Mr. George Cherry, who was one of the Admiralty Commissioners for victualling at that period. In a private letter to the Commodore dated May 14th of the following year, Mr. Cherry writes :—

“After due consideration of your statement of the purchase of Wine etc. at Rio Janeiro and the attendant circumstances, I can only give you in opinion that it is nearly if not altogether impossible to counteract the Machinations and Combinations of Unprincipled people. I lament that men of that description seem numerous in the public service, and to defraud the Crown is by many scarce held to be dishonourable or a Crime.”

Mr. Cherry in the same letter finally deploras that :—

“Despite the utmost exertions made to provide the Squadron under your command with ‘Sour Crout’ the severe weather at the time carried the vessel (bearing it) into Ramsgate Pier.”

Cornwallis arrived at Madras on September 3, 1789, after a voyage of nearly seven months. He found awaiting him there two letters from his brother, the Governor-General. The first, dated the previous June, shows how important he too considered the question of developing a new harbour in the Andaman Islands :—

“It gave me great pleasure to learn yesterday by the arrival of the *Melville Castle* Indiaman that your squadron had actually sailed from Portsmouth on the 13th of February, and my private letters assured me that you was then in perfect health. I sincerely hope that your command may not prove disagreeable to you, and that it is put on such a footing as to enable you to save some money.

“I conclude your first destination will be Madras, but I trust I shall very soon see you here, for you know I cannot go to you. You will be the best judge of the properest time for coming, and of the disposition of your ships; I can hardly think however that you will bring the *Crown* hither, and indeed it would require great care and attention to bring in one of the large frigates; by notifying your intentions to me you shall have the best assistance we can give.

“I, last winter, sent two vessels under an intelligent officer of the Bombay marine, to survey and examine the great Andaman, who discovered two good harbours, one of which on the east side, near the south end of the island, appears capable of containing all the fleets of Europe, and is so circumstanced as to be very easy to repair to, or to depart from, at any season in the year, and during either of the monsoons, and may be supplied with provisions from hence in a very short time, especially in the north-east monsoon. The inhabitants are Caffres, and although they are by no means inclined to be civil to strangers, are not of so ferocious a disposition as they have been reported; they live entirely on fish, and there are no animals but wild hogs, and no appearance of cultivation. I intend to send the same officer, Captain Blair, in August, to take possession of the island and in particular of this harbour, and I should hope that in the course of the winter you would either go in person, or send some officers on whom you can depend, to pass a final judgment on this very important business. If it should be found to answer, I should remove the establishment from Prince of Wales’s Island thither. I have kept this discovery as secret as I could, and of course you will do the same.

“The King’s recovery has made me very happy. I shall continue to write to you as anything occurs to me that I think you would wish to know. Matters here go on prosperously, and you will hear at Madras that the French are going to withdraw their military establishments to Mauritius and leave only a factory at Pondicherry. If it should come in your way to be personally civil to the Comte de Conway, I beg to recommend it to you, as he has uniformly shown me the greatest attention. I cannot express how happy I shall be to see you.”

Earl Cornwallis wrote again on September 5th, two days after the squadron had arrived. He does not appear to have

taken Tippoo Sultan very seriously at that time ; but he was wrong, as a little more than three months later Travancore was stormed and the war between the East India Company and that potentate broke out :—

“ As the length of your voyage has exceeded my expectation, I will not pretend to calculate the time when you may arrive, but in case you should not have determined how to dispose of your squadron, which must leave the coast of Coromandel by the 14th of next month, I wish to give you every information I can to assist your decision. If you mean when you come hither in a frigate to order the rest of the ships to Bombay, I know of no political objection to it ; you will hear much at Madras of Tippoo’s intention to attack our ally the Rajah of Travancore, but the same reports have prevailed for these last two years, and I think it highly improbable that he would adopt so rash a measure at a time when his tributary Rajahs on the coast of Malabar are nearly in a state of rebellion, when he can expect no possible assistance from the French, and when he must be assured that our whole force would be employed against him, and has the greatest reason to apprehend that we are sufficiently connected with the Marattas and the Nizam to induce them to attack his northern frontier.”

One of Cornwallis’s endeavours upon arriving in India was to place the arrangements for victualling his squadron upon a sound commercial basis. Apparently this had been done up to now in a more or less haphazard way, the squadron, or detached ships, purchasing at different places what they required. It must have been a natural temptation for a purser of any ship to make something out of these various transactions, and that it was so is shown by the difficulties which were put in the way, when it was finally decided that the most efficient way of dealing with the situation was to employ contractors. Cornwallis asked for tenders in the usual way, but here again he was up against dishonest persons who acted as agents between himself and the contractor, and who made money in the most flagrant manner out of the rupee exchange.

In due course, tenders for victualling were received from three individuals. The first contract was given to a Mr. Bidulph, who does not appear to have made it pay. He gave it up after the first year, and the contract was awarded to Mr. John

Cockrane. Some of the correspondence received from various pursers of the ships, which Mr. Biddulph forwarded to the Commodore, are amusing, were it not for the fact that they display a more or less hostile attitude to the whole idea. One purser writes rather curtly to the contractor to know how long provisions supplied by him are supposed to last. Mr. Biddulph writes back equally curtly to the effect that "the said provisions are supposed to last as long as They were aboard the ship they were put on"! In the last paragraph of one of his letters to the Commodore, in which he sets out his difficulties, Mr. Biddulph says :—

"I presume to request your interference further, but if the Complaint [referring to the contract] should appear illegal and unreasonable, That you do me the favour to mention me as a person engaged in the supply of this Squadron, who by this means may have a fair hearing and be rescued from anonymous and chymical Appearance."

Instances of opposition on the part of his officers to Cornwallis's arrangements for the most economical supply and victualling of his fleet are numerous, and he was frequently obliged to issue stringent orders on the subject. In connection with the survey on the sails of a ship, where fraud had been committed by interested parties, one of these reads :—

"The Commander-in-Chief desires that the Captains and Commanders of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels under His Command will be careful to prevent such abuses in future, and to recollect that abuses when once begun are seldom confined to one article alone, and that a superior Officer, who from inattention suffers those under him to commit such shameful practises, has as much to answer for as those who may act from bad motives."

Here is another memo which shows how the contractors were up against persons on board ship who had without doubt formerly received a commission on the purchase of stores in smaller quantities. It refers to a large order for "Bolts of Canvas." The quantity supplied did not apparently tally with the amount received. The bolts were eventually found on board a ship nearly a year afterwards, when the following memo is issued :—

"The Commander-in-Chief never was of the opinion that it was intended by anyone on board to appropriate them [the missing Bolts] to his own private use. But if it was done to take

off the profit from the Merchant, and thereby prevent the King's Ships from being supplied with stores upon reasonable terms, the motive was equally wicked and mischievous."

To the Captain of the ship in question he wrote :—

" . . . I shall therefore from these circumstances hope that my present fears are groundless, and that you agree with me, that Dishonesty is the same in principal whether it be a private or public concern, the Distinction only is a greater danger of punishment in the one case than in the other. . . ."

Cornwallis wrote to many of his naval friends in England on the same subject. In April 1790 he told Hood :—

" . . . Every thing relating to the Navy in this country has gone on for so long a time in a certain fix'd manner of expence that I am afraid it will be very difficult to prevent abuses, unless there were persons appointed on the part of Government, as there are in other places ; it is now open to so many. I shall do what I can however to check them."

Writing to Sir Charles Middleton the following year, he said :—

" . . . By what I now see the Less we have to do with the Company's people the better. I have appointed my present secretary to be Store-Keeper, as somebody must keep the accounts. And I will take all the care I can, but it is not easy to stop abuses which have gone on for so many years, and where so many have an interest in Their continuance.

" C: B:[iddulph, the contractor] I believe takes all the care He can to have His supplies conducted in a fair manner. I wish most sincerely that there was a person appointed on the part of government with a handsome salary, which should put Him above the little dirty tricks too much practiced in this country. If a commissioner of the Navy is wanted upon any station it surely is upon this."

A paragraph of one of his letters to Nelson reads :—

" . . . Unless we had an establishment on the part of Government nothing but absolute necessity should keep men of War here. There seems a pleasure in wasting, shewn even by those who would probably be above doing a mean or dishonest thing, what is then to be expected from the understrappers ?

" I shall take all the care I can to cheque them, in doing which I shall be pretty sure of the ill will of most people here and

perhaps of not a few at Home, still there is a satisfaction in doing what one thinks right. . . .”

That the Admiralty approved of the method of contracting out for supplies to the Fleet is shown by a letter from Mr. Stephens, one of the Victualling Board of the Admiralty [not to be confused with Mr. Philip Stephens, Permanent Secretary at the same time to the Admiralty], who writes :—

“It is unnecessary for me individually to say anything on the subject of the Contract, as the Board’s letter justifies the high sense of your exertions which all the Commissioners entertain. For the public good, and that you may be enabled the more effectually to correct all the abuses obtained in other departments they have taken the liberty of submitting some additional regulations to your consideration.”

The recommendations referred to are signed by Mr. George Cherry, who has been already referred to. One of them appears highly impracticable ; it runs as follows :—

“Ordering or Permitting Provisions reported Unserviceable and sometimes a Nuisance to be thrown overboard opens a door to other practises, it is therefore submitted not to give such orders but constantly to direct condemned provisions to be returned to some person interested in the goodness of them if possible ; but if there should not be any such interested person attending the Squadron then to such other person as may be concerned in regulating the affairs of the Victualling, and he be directed to receive and expose them to Public Sale, even though it be urged that they will not fetch anything, as heretofore has been urged to cover gross iniquity.”

Considering the number of surveys there were on supplies of bread and meat on board ships of the squadron, in which members of the Boards described such supplies as “rotten, stinking, filthy, and quite unfit for men to eat,” one cannot see how any good could have arisen by exposing them to public sale, and the inconvenience of keeping bad meat, cheese, etc., on board a smallish ship in a hot climate can better be imagined than described. One cannot help being struck in reading the numerous orders and memos issued by Cornwallis during his four years on the East India Station, how it was ever uppermost in his mind to study the interests of the taxpayer and reduce the cost of his squadron to a minimum.

Sir Charles Middleton [afterwards Lord Barham], as Comptroller to the Victualling Board of the Navy, had attempted similar reforms, but from the following letter written to Cornwallis in April 1790, he appears to have given them up as hopeless. He says :—

I have within these few days received your two favours of the 5th and 30th of November last, and am very glad you found your Brother Lord Cornwallis so well in Health and the Climate so favourable to his Constitution. This Country has reason to be thankfull and particularly the East India Company, that his Lordship has been able to bear up against the Difficulties he had to encounter and the many oppositions which Reformation and Reduction must expect to find though placed in the best Hands and carried on with the soundest Judgment. I have felt this way myself in a much inferior Station, and seeing no probability of amendment in the office I was in, nor any serious intention of taking advantage of ye Enquiry that had been made in the Naval Departments, nor correcting the Abuses that had been by those means exposed, I thought it much for my own Credit to retire and have resigned the office accordingly. My Successor is Mr. Martin, who I hope will have Health and Strength to go through it. The Office in its present state was too much for me to support, but to others less acquainted with the fatigue It may appear otherwise.

Should the Articles sent you be more or less not the assortments that are proper you must impute it to ye system of office and not to officers sitting at ye Navy Board who have no concern in this department. This is one of these defects which I took the liberty to point out. They are indeed so many, But a Man must be mad in the Situation or to have continued the Responsibility on his own Shoulders—

There are People however to be found, ready to accept [word missing—responsibility ?] of any Charge however circumstanced, and in view of this subject, I should hope you will not be obliged to continue but longer than you find it agreeable to yourself. The French too, having neither Constitution nor Government, will I conclude make it unnecessary for us to continue a Squadron in India longer than the present year. . . .

Our State of Politics continues much the same as when you

left us. The King's recovery was a most providential event and universally acknowledged. At present everything goes well—Trade flourishes beyond any previous Period—The Revenue exclusive of ye Millions set apart for ye Public Debt far exceeds our expenditure this year by £600,000 and is likely to continue.

In short—There is nothing that can be wished by the Ministers that does not outrun their Expectations.

My best wishes attend you, being with esteem and regard,

Dear Sir, Your faithfull and Obedient servant,

CHAS. MIDDLETON.

Cornwallis's endeavours were given every encouragement by Chatham and Hood, who was at this date at the Admiralty. Writing in December 1790, the former said :—

“I cannot conclude without expressing to you the full sense entertained here of the great zeal and attention with which you have applied yourself to correct, in all transactions in behalf of Government, those abuses which had been, I fear, too prevalent in India ; and from which conduct, I am sure, the most beneficial consequences to the public service must be derived.”

Hood also wrote :—

“I am well aware that you must have much to do to guard against the impositions a Commander-in-Chief is liable to at such a distance from England ; but you may rest assured of the most perfect satisfaction of this Board that, upon every occasion, you will act for the true interest and advantage of the public.”

A year later than this Hood again wrote :—

“You may rest assured that not only the Board of Admiralty but every other Board you have had to correspond with are most perfectly satisfied with every part of your conduct, and convinced that you have been unremitting in your pains for bringing the expenses of his Majesty's squadron under your command as low as possible.”

Howe seemed somewhat sceptical about Cornwallis being able to effect the necessary reforms, for he wrote in April 1790 :—

“Your efforts, my estimable friend, to abolish corruption, will be an Herculean labour, unless you can find purity in the natives ! I did propose a coalition with the India Directors, on the last prospect of a rupture with France, that the India Company should assist us with stores to be furnished here by the

Crown ; but the conference did not proceed far enough to take any substantial form. But be not discouraged in your most commendable pursuit. The disinterested principles of the commander will most assuredly operate with good effect to check the peculation which cannot be wholly prevented ; for you cannot take the direction of all the inferior branches of service upon yourself."

At a later date Howe wrote again on the same subject. His letter is evidently in answer to one from Cornwallis, who appears to have taken him to task for his want of encouragement. It says :—

"I did not mean to insinuate that your hopes of restraining abuses appear chimerical by anything I suggested in my preceding letter on the subject of your desire to correct *all the* abuses which have long prevailed in the maritime service of India. My allusion was (as far as I can now recollect the particulars) to the difficulty of combating with united peculation. To moderate excesses to which it is extended in the various branches having reference to the naval line of service seemed a great and beneficial undertaking. To abolish such abuse partakes of too much hazard, I should think, by early exertions, antecedent to an assured means of finding competent substitutes to replace the offenders and preventing disappointment of the object to be attained.

"Everything that upright sentiments and steady zeal to promote the public service can accomplish, your superintendence of the maritime concerns in India will not have overlooked."

CHAPTER II

1789-1790

ALMOST from the moment of Cornwallis's arrival in the East the French Naval Commander and Commandants ashore tried to make difficulties on some pretext or other.

Within a week or so after this date he received the following letter from the French Commander-in-Chief complaining of the fact that the recently arrived British Squadron was superior in force to that under his command :—

September 3rd, 1789.

TO THE HON^{BLE} MR. CORNWALLIS, COMMANDER OF HIS BRITANNIC
MAJESTY'S NAVAL FORCE IN THE INDIAN SEAS.

SIR,—

By the convention made between the Courts of London and Versailles, it was agreed upon that neither power should send men of war of a larger class to India than Frigates.

I have the honour, Sir, to observe to you that the Court of Versailles has strictly complied with the convention, since the force I command consists only of four frigates and two cutters.

I saw you arrive with a force infinitely superior to mine, this difference between us, you must be sensible, sir, ought not to prevent me doing my duty. I do it then on this moment, in praying that you will acquaint me with the reason, why the court of London has broken the convention made by the two powers.

I shall enclose to the Court of Versailles the answer you will be pleased to honour me with.

I am, Sir, with testiments of the utmost respect,

Your most humble and very obedient Servant,

THE COUNT MACNAMARA,

Chief of the division of His most Christian Majesty's
Naval Force employed in the Seas of Asia.

Throughout his correspondence with the French, Cornwallis showed a dignified restraint, even when matters between the two fleets became strained to the utmost, as will be related in a subsequent chapter. His attitude, however, was always firm. One cannot help but remember that though peace between the two nations had existed for seven years, the knowledge that the French had helped to wrest our American Colonies from us must have rankled in the mind of every Englishman.

His answer to the above-mentioned complaint was characteristic of the man :—

SIR,—

I have been honoured with your letter complaining of my having arrived in this Country with a Force superior to that under your command, and contrary to a convention between the two Nations. In answer to which, I have the honor to acquaint you that I know of no convention, but as an Officer, I think it my Duty to obey the Orders of my Sovereign with whatever Force He may be graciously pleased to put under my Command.

I beg, Sir, that you will be so obliging as to believe that I shall be happy in having an Opportunity of showing any Civilities and Attentions to you, or those of your Nation. Being, Sir, with very great respect,

Your most obedient Humble Servant,

WILLIAM CORNWALLIS.

MADRAS, 6th Sept., 1789.

In his account to the Admiralty of this incident, he writes :—

“ Captain Moorsom, who called at Mauritius for water, has given me the best account he could collect of the French Naval Force in these seas, by which it appears, that we are not so very superior as Mr. Macnamara is pleased to represent, as it was also reported that the *Patriot* of 74 guns was expected.

“ The wise measures taken by our Government at home, and the confused state of the French, make it not very likely that we should have any occasion to try our Force.”

The next “ Unfortunate Incident ” occurred in November 1789, when Lieutenant Bateman was the senior officer on board H.M.S. *Perseverance*, when she was lying at anchor in Diamond Harbour.

The correspondence on the matter also gives an account of what happened. The first letter is the answer to the French Commandant's complaint, and is written from on board the *Perseverance* in Diamond Harbour and dated November 10th, 1789 :—

SIR,—

The Governor General having communicated to me your letter, complaining that the *Patriot*, a French Vessel, had been fired upon by an English Frigate anchored at Diamond creek.

I apprehend, Sir, that you must be ignorant of my having arrived in this Country, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's Ships, and I beg to remind you that your complaint ought to have been address to me, The King's Ships being under no other authority. I have however from a hearty Desire that the most friendly Intercourse should subsist between the two Nations, made enquiry into the Complaint, and find that the French Vessel hauled into Diamond Harbour, (as it appeared to the Officer commanding on board) with a view to insult His Majesty's Ship *Perseverance*, where my Broad Pendant was flying, by not lowering the Top Gallant sails, or showing some mark of respect to the King's Ship, which is a practice observed by all nations.

A few Musquets it seems were discharged, but not, as it is positively reported to me, with intent to strike the Vessel, but only to remind those on board of the Compliment usually made to the King's Colours. But, Sir, I very much disapprove of the Measure taken by the Officer of the *Perseverance*, being more inclined to attribute such want of Attention on board the French Vessel, to the Ignorance, and ill manners of the Party concerned than to any intended Insult.

I have therefore reprimanded the Officer, and given most public Orders to all Ships, which will prevent anything of the Kind happening again, which might tend to interrupt the Harmony subsisting between the two Nations, and which it is very much my Desire should continue.

I have the Honor to be, Sir,

Your most obedient, Humble Servant,

W. CORNWALLIS.

TO MONSIEUR MONTÈGNE,
Commandant at Chandernagor.

The ship referred to on this occasion could not, of course, have been the French Man of War *Patriot* of 74 guns mentioned earlier. In his account of the occurrence to the Admiralty, Cornwallis wrote :—

“Lieut. Bateman is sensible of his having carried his Zeal for the Honour of his Majesty’s Colours upon this occasion rather too far, from his having observed it to be the general Practice of *All Nations*. I shall give further orders, which will be a reprimand to him, and effectually prevent anything of the Kind happening again, as it is very much my wish that the Ships under my command should act in the most Friendly manner to ships of all other Nations, and particularly to those with whom we have been too frequently at variance.”

That the incident did not adversely effect Lieutenant Bateman’s future is shown by the fact that exactly five days subsequent to this letter Cornwallis announces to the Admiralty that he has promoted that Officer to be First Lieutenant of the *Perseverance*.

Some three months after his arrival, Cornwallis took the opportunity of paying a second visit to his brother at Calcutta, where he came across that globe-trotting adventurer, William Hickey. There is no mention made of him in any of the Commodore’s papers, and one would imagine that he found nothing in common with the man. Hickey evidently cordially disliked Cornwallis, judging by what he wrote about him in his memoirs. [Edited by Alfred Spencer, 1923.] The following appears in vol. iii. p. 361 :—

“Commodore Cornwallis, Commander-in-Chief of the British Squadron in the Eastern Seas and brother to the noble Governor-General, though very unlike him both in person and manner, came to visit his lordship. The Commodore was a living Truncheon, but more of a brute than Smollett made his hero. After a sojourn of three weeks in Calcutta, during which he abused or found fault with everybody and everything, he took his departure for a country better adapted to his rough temper and disposition, that is the Andamans, a cluster of islands situated in the Bay of Bengal, off the eastern coast of Pegu and Siam, and said to be inhabited by a race of anthropophagi or cannibals, described by some historian as being utterly incapable of civilization. Amongst this valiant people did the valiant Commodore Corn-

wallis (and valiant he indisputably was, of which he gave abundant proofs) prefer living, to that of a polished society of an English settlement. In common justice to him, however, let me add, that in his apparently strange attachment he had a particular object in view, that of forming a colony upon the grand Andaman, which island was well known to abound with forest timber of a fine quality and prodigious size equally well suited for ships or buildings. . . .

“During Commodore Cornwallis’s residence at Calcutta, I became acquainted with two very fine fellows belonging to his fleet, Captain Smith, an old Post-Captain, who commanded the *Perseverance*, a noble frigate, and Captain Delgarno, of the *Atalanta*, sloop of war. The latter, who was without exception the most drunken varlet I ever saw, was a prodigious favourite of the Commodore’s, who had made him a master and a commander, intending further promotion for him when opportunity offered.

“Captain Delgarno was upon all occasions a zealous defender of Commodore Cornwallis, insisting that a great part of his roughness of address and manners was assumed, his natural disposition being far otherwise; that the cause of the frequent quarrels he was said to be involved in arose from the want of consideration in the officers by either omitting to carry into effect the orders he gave, or impatiently replying to his complaints of their inattention. ‘I am certain’ (said Captain Delgarno) ‘that were I to be in the same ship there never would be an angry word passed between us, and if left to my own choice, I would prefer being his captain to any other man in the Navy.’ Captain Delgarno, however, verified the remark of its being much easier to preach than to practise, for shortly after he made the above speech he gained the rank of Post and had command of the flag-ship given him, Commodore Cornwallis having then attained the rank of Admiral. Only three days did he serve under the man he had professed to know so well how to manage, ere a violent dispute occurred, in which Captain Delgarno, instead of yielding a jot to his commanding officer, strenuously opposed him, in consequence of which from being the warmest friends they became inveterate enemies, so much so as within the short period of two months to induce Captain Delgarno to resign the command of the Admiral’s ship and take his passage to Europe on board an East Indiaman.”

Hickey allowed his animosity to outrun the truth. Delgarno did not resign on account of a quarrel with the Commodore, nor did he return to England in an East Indiaman. His health broke down in 1791, and in July of that year Cornwallis sent him home with dispatches in the *Leopard*, which was commanded by his old friend, Captain Blankett. Delgarno never recovered and died in 1796.

As will be told later in this chapter, Captain Schomberg was sent home in disgrace, but this was entirely due to his own indiscretion. The only other recorded occasion when Cornwallis fell out with one of his Captains was when he wrote the following somewhat caustic letter to Captain Byron :—

SIR,—

As you were pleased to take passengers on board the *Phœnix* (in which Ship I was embark'd at Madras) without asking my permission and to man the Yards upon my leaving the Ship at Diamond Harbour, which had been discontinued since we left St Iago, in consequence of an accident having soon afterwards happen'd on board the *Crown*, by which one man was kill'd and two others in great danger, and you were yesterday pleased to punish a man on board without advising with me upon it, or asking my permission, but saying (as you would probably have done to a Lady passenger) that You were afraid You had disturbed me, I have taken the trouble of writing this to put you in mind that when I am on board a Ship of the Squadron under my own command I am commanding officer, and although it is probable I may not be inclined to enter much into the detail of the Ship, Yet the Captain and officers will be answerable for any neglect or want of respect to me Their commanding officer.

No man was more beloved by those serving under him than Cornwallis.

In the whole of his four years in India there is only one instance of his having to sentence a man to that terribly severe, but at that period not unusual, punishment, a hundred lashes with the cat.

His fleet order on the matter is worthy of record :—

“ MINERVA ” AT SEA, 21st Novr., 1792.

The Dispositions of several creditable Witnesses having been taken before the Commander in Chief, by which it appears to

Him, that Samuel French, a Seaman belonging to the *Minerva*, did on Sunday the eleventh day of November last, upon the Hospital Island in Old Harbour, abuse in the grossest, and most infamous Manner, Mr. Peffirs the Boatswain of the said Ship, and also that He did strike Him. It was of course the Intention of the Commander in Chief, to try the said Samuel French the first Opportunity by a Court Martial; but the Prisoner having sent a very Penitential petition, acknowledging His Crime, and that His Life is justly forfeited by the Laws of His Country, requesting that He may not be tried, but receive such punishment as shall be thought proper; and Mr. Peffirs being also desirous to spare His Life;

The Commander in Chief therefore directs, that the said Samuel French shall receive one hundred Lashes on board the *Minerva*, at two punishments, after which, He shall be released and suffered to do His Duty.—

He hopes that there is no other Man on board the *Minerva* capable of such an Act, and further declares that should anything of the kind happen in future, it shall not pass over in the same Manner.

He was also beloved by his officers. He studied their interests, especially those in junior positions. One of his first acts on arrival in the East was to write to the Admiralty pointing out the unfairness of requiring a junior officer, invalided home, to pay for his own passage. In this letter he said:—

“I made enquiry in what way a Passage might be obtained for an Officer so circumstanced, but I found with every assistance of the Government here it would cost him so large a sum that it must be the ruin of an Officer who had not a considerable fortune of his own. I beg of you to state this matter for their Lordship’s consideration.”

That this had its effect subsequent correspondence shows, as afterwards passages home were provided for all officers invalided, at any rate during the period of Cornwallis’s command.

It was fortunate that the Governor-General had his brother as Commander-in-Chief of the British Squadron in the East.

When one considers the difficult problems which arose during the years Cornwallis was in command of the East India Station, it was of the greatest importance that the forces on land

and sea should act in co-operation. The position was a curious one. The Commodore was under the direct orders of the Admiralty, and that he was not in any way bound to obey the orders of the Governor-General would appear to be the case by the following memorandum dated on board the *Crown*, Prince of Wales Island, February 14th, 1791 :—

“The Commander-in-Chief having reason to believe that Capt. Byron of His Majesty’s Ship *Phoenix* has (upon the plea of an Application having been made to him on the Malabar Coast) disobeyed the positive order sent to him on the *Ariel* Sloop, which order was founded upon instructions received from Europe at a very critical time. Discretionary orders have (when thought proper) been given to the Captains of His Majesty’s Ships to act upon the Application of the Right Honorable The Governor General, but they are to observe that do not upon any pretense disobey a positive order sent to them by the Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty’s Ships.”

In March of 1790 Cornwallis delivered a severe snub to the Governor of Bombay, who had written him protesting against men serving on East India Company’s vessels being drafted into H.M. Ships. His answer was :—

“I have been favoured with your letter relating to the Seamen belonging to the Company’s vessels. In answer to which I am to acquaint you, that it is very far from my wish to distress them by receiving other men on board the King’s Ships under my command. But I know of no Act of Parliament, by which English Seamen can be detained to serve for a Number of Years in this Country against their will on board of any Vessel. They naturally look up to a Man of War for Redress and Protection which it is very much my inclination as well as my duty to afford them.”

On a subsequent date in the same year, Captain Schomberg took offence at what he supposed to be an intentional insult to the British Flag by one of the East India Company’s Forts. He behaved extremely foolishly, and wrote the following insulting letter to the Acting-Governor of the Madras Presidency :—

“ATALANTA,” MADRAS ROAD, 14th Sept., 1790.

SIR,—

It is with some concern that I am obliged to point out to you the great Indignity which has been offered to His Majesty’s

Colours this Morning by Fort St. George, not shewing *their's*, when I was working into Madras Road in His Majesty's Sloop *Atalanta* under my Command, as well as the Fort not saluting when the King's Sloop anchored, which has (I understand) been customary, as well as respectfull. Had I not been apprehensive of the Innocent suffering, I most undoubtedly would have directed a *Shot*, immediately at the *Flag Staff*, as I cannot but suppose a British Garrison must be always on the *Lookout*, and not unacquainted with His Majesty's Colours.

Yours, etc., etc.,

T. SCHOMBERG.

No answer was sent, and another insulting letter was written by Captain Schomberg to the same official. In the meanwhile the matter had been placed before the Commodore, who suspended Schomberg, and caused full inquiry to be made. He was satisfied that his officer was entirely in the wrong, and wrote a very diplomatic letter to the Governor, who in his turn wrote most generously and requested that Captain Schomberg be forgiven and reinstated. But Cornwallis was adamant, and Schomberg ("Poor Schomberg," as Lord Hood had called him) was sent home more or less in disgrace.

In his letter to the Admiralty on the matter, Cornwallis wrote :—

"I thought the conduct of Captain Schomberg so exceedingly improper by taking a matter of that kind up in such a violent manner, which he would have nothing to do with, as there were three men of war in the road, and I thought it a neglect of duty, as well as very disrespectful to me, to whom all matters of that nature ought to be submitted, and that it should not be in the Power of inferior officers to embroil the services by acting for themselves at the moment, and thereby occasion a disagreement between the services which may be of the worst consequence to the public. I therefore suspended Captain Schomberg, and on the 27th appointed an Officer to Command the *Atalanta*."

These are the only three occasions which are found in the whole of the correspondence over a number of years in which there is friction between the Navy and the Government of India. Taking all things into consideration, this speaks well for the tact of the Naval Commander-in-Chief.

Cornwallis wrote the following letter upon Captain Schomberg's indiscretion to his old friend Leveson-Gower :—

“ We have had Rumours of Wars in Europe, and armaments ! but I do not give much credit to it, being of opinion that the Spaniard will think again before He ventures single hand to wage war with us, and Johnny can give Him no help at present, time will however show.

“ A complaint will appear at the Board in regard to the conduct of Captⁿ Schomberg, which occasion'd His return to England. He wanted at Last to go Home sick, but that I did not think I could do, tho' His health was really bad. I have however no desire to put Him to further trouble, Having stated the matter to the board, I of course Leave it entirely to them. Between friends I suspect since His dispute with the R(oyal D(uke) He has set Himself up as a sort of champion in that way. L^d C:(hatham) was so obliging as to offer me to name my Lieutenants. I took them from the *Canada* as far as I wish'd to go, and I do declare in regard to Captⁿ Schomberg, I pitied His situation, and shewed Him from the first Hour, to His promotion, the most particular attention. What then must my astonishment be, when I found Him the moment it could be in any manner in His power, acting in direct contradiction to my wishes, in points where He could (or ought) not to be at all concerned, and upon my arrival at Madras I found He had survey'd provisions in the sloop, and applied for a survey upon almost all the stores, reported defects, and in short seem'd determined, in return for the utmost kindness on my part, to make Himself as troublesome and disagreeable as possible, in the points of Service He knew I was most anxious about, and from the specimen He has given of His Violence to the Government at Madras, there is every reason to believe He would have kept me in constant hot water wherever He went. I have therefore thought it highly necessary to take the steps I have done, and I think a man who has shewn Himself so totally void of what ought to be most esteem'd in mankind, had Little reason to expect that I should act contrary to my opinion as an officer for His accommodation.

“ I am very glad to have S^r Rich: Strachan, and Capt. Smith of the *Perseverance* is a most excellent man. The seamen are more subject to the scurvy here than in the West Indies. For myself I like it very well, there is a great variety upon this

station, and if the war with Tippoo had not obliged us to go to the coast of Malabar during the whole of the North East monsoon I should have Liked it much better as it would have given me an opportunity of seeing a great Deal more of it, and I think it may be useful to our young folks in future, but except from necessity, or the purpose of exploring I am against keeping men of War in this country, which in general is destructive to officers, and to the Younger part in particular, where nothing is heard of but *making of money*, and Yet I hope it has been Less practiced of Late Years than formerly, there are nevertheless many able and worthy men who would do credit to any country and situation."

It was not until some months after his arrival that Cornwallis received any letters from home. Leveson-Gower, now a Rear-Admiral, was the first to write : their letters must have crossed.

"Soon after you left this country I was obliged to resign the Admiralty. I had before Christmas met some things which were very disagreeable to me, but on my return to town after those holidays, I found so much of what might really be called incivility, that as soon as his Majesty was said to be well enough recovered to do business, I gave in my resignation. It was, however, August before a new patent was made out, when Sir Samuel Drake's name appeared. He has been worried out of his life by a wife, and our friend Gardner is now there. I hope he will long remain there, for he is a most worthy and honourable man. He has been chosen for Plymouth without opposition, but Macbride threatens mighty things against him at the general election.

"As soon as I found myself totally at liberty I set out for Staffordshire and visited Trentham, where I had not been since 1753. It is very much improved ; more so indeed than any place I have ever seen altered. I forgot to tell you that upon Drake's death the Admiralty was offered to Hotham, who would not accept it. You may depend on this being true, because he told me so himself, and you know he is always very correct in what he says."

This was a case of the political jobbery of the day. When Howe was forced to resign his position as First Lord, the situation was made impossible for Leveson-Gower, who was his friend and nominee at the Admiralty, so he, too, was practically

kicked out, whether he had satisfactorily carried out his duties never entered into the minds of the political wire-pullers. He also heard from Lord Hood, part of whose letter has already been given in the previous chapter. The same letter tells him of the loss of the unfortunate ship *Guardian*, "When she ran foul of a prodigious island of ice," and goes on to say :—

"Some few got into the boats ; and one of those boats, after leaving the ship, was taken up very providentially on the 10th day by a French ship from the Mauritius, bound to the Cape with troops. At the moment the poor creatures were so worn out by thirst, hunger, and fatigue that they could not have lived three days longer ; and there appears to me not a shadow of hope that any other in the other boats can be saved. Poor Riou was determined to take the fate of the *Guardian*, and resisted all persuasion to take to a boat. I send you a letter he wrote at the moment the master left the ship. Lord and Lady Camelford are in the deepest distress upon this melancholy catastrophe ; their only son being in the *Guardian*, and would not quit Riou."

In this letter Hood also mentions the now famous mutiny of part of the crew of the *Bounty* :—

"You will likewise hear, before this can reach you, of the *Bounty* armed ship being run away by a part of her crew, under the direction of a Mr. Christian, one of her Master's mates. Probably you may think it right to send one of your frigates to Otaheite to endeavour to recover her. . . ."

The following is the unfortunate Riou's message to the Admiralty ; a pathetic letter from a man who thought himself at the point of death :—

"If ever any part of the officers or crew of the *Guardian* should survive to get home, I have only to say their conduct, after the fatal stroke against the island of ice, was admirable and wonderful in everything that related to their duties, considered either as private men, or his Majesty's service.

"As there seems to be no possibility of my remaining many hours in this world, I beg leave to recommend to the consideration of the Admiralty a sister, who, if my services and conduct should be found deserving any memory, their favour might be shewn to her, together with a widowed mother."

Riou did not die, however. By a miracle his ship kept afloat, waterlogged as she was. After being battered by the sea

for many weeks, she was found by a Dutch Merchant vessel, which took her in tow to Cape Town. Although the brave survivors were rescued, the sea was not to be deprived of its prey. A storm arose, and the *Guardian* went ashore and became a total wreck. Riou was subsequently killed serving with Nelson at Copenhagen.

Cornwallis also heard from his brother the Bishop, partly a business letter, and partly telling him the gossip of the day. He also mentions the possibility of war with Spain, as, at the time he wrote, things looked black and a rupture between the two countries seemed imminent :—

“A dissolution of Parliament is talked of for next week, and I begin to believe it. Indeed, there is so much canvassing and drinking, and other bad effects of electioneering are so spreading, that a dissolution will be very beneficial to the country. . . .

“All your sea friends seem to be very alert upon the possibility of a Spanish war; and there is no disinclination to the service or obstruction from party as heretofore. Lord Townsend is now quite a ministerial supporter. He fell fast asleep the other day during a very composing speech of Lord Stormont, and fell down on the ground, was carried out by the Prince, recovered soon and spoke in favour of Ministry. Lord Leicester’s new place in the Mint turns out, I am told, £4,000 per annum. How fortunate! But he will soon succeed his father, who is evidently declining very fast.

“The King was never better, and upon the whole we seem to be going on very well.

“I shall go to Culford next week, and hope to find a great progress in the house. Palgrave was here the other day. I shewed him the plan of the house at Culford, of which he expressed much approbation. It will certainly be a most excellent house, and I think the whole expense cannot exceed £5,000.” . . .

To any reader who may happen to have seen Culford, now in the possession of Lord Cadogan, £5,000 seems an absurdly small amount for it to have cost to rebuild.

The following letter from Henry Dundas (afterwards Lord Melville) is of interest, as it shows that no stone was left unturned in order to obtain votes :—

“ . . . On the approach of a general election one must be

attentive to the Requests of Chief Magistrates. Mr. Glegg, the son of the Chief Magistrate of the Burgh of Montrose, is a clerk on board your Ship : It does not occur to me how the mention of him to you can be of any service to him, but I have been requested to do it."

CHAPTER III

1790

It will be remembered that in December 1789 Tippoo (or Tipu) Sultan attacked, on the flimsiest of pretexts, the defences of Travancore, the capital of a state in Southern India, whose Rajah was a friend and ally of Great Britain. The Indian Government were bound to take notice of this unprovoked assault.

The Governor-General, Earl Cornwallis, endeavoured to end the dispute by negotiating impartially between the two potentates, but without success. In March of the following year he gave "explicit instructions to the Madras Government not to allow a faithful ally to be overwhelmed by an insolent and cruel enemy" [*Rulers of India*, by L. T. Bowring]. As it was likely that the East India Company would be committed to war, the Home Office, which at the time was responsible to the King for Indian affairs, intervened. In due course Cornwallis received instructions from the Admiralty to the effect that he was "required and directed to correspond with, and obey such Orders and Directions as he might receive from His Majesty, by his Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department."

It is a further proof of how jealous were the Home Government of any interference by the East India Company, or even the Governor-General with His Majesty's Fleet in the East.

How far the French assisted Tippoo at the commencement of his campaign against the British it is difficult to say. That they did so towards the end is certain. So far as it is possible to judge, from the documents in the author's possession, it is probable that they assisted from the moment the British declared war against him; but that at the start they did their best to throw dust in the eyes of those who were engaged in its conduct.

From the very first it was Cornwallis's aim and object to prevent supplies of arms and ammunition reaching Tippoo. The

prospect of this happening naturally occurred to the Indian Government, but the Governor-General and his advisers appear to have been very uncertain in their minds as to the possibility of any unfriendly action on the part of the French.

Earl Cornwallis's first letter to his brother on the subject is dated February 8, 1790 ; it is marked " Private " and says :—

" Everything in the Carnatic and in Travancore by my last advices remained in the same situation as when I last wrote to you.

" If Abercromby should be able to attempt a diversion on the Malabar coast, you will I am sure give him all the assistance in your power. It may likewise be proper, so long as the weather on that coast will permit, that some cruisers should prevent the importation of troops, arms, or military stores into Tippoo's territories. I should hardly think that the *Compte de Conway* would interfere, or afford assistance to Tippoo of any kind, but if, on the contrary, any French vessels with a considerable number of troops or quantity of stores should come upon that coast under pretence of going to their settlement at Mahé, I think they should be told that they may proceed to Pondicherry, but that as Mahé is only an inconsiderable factory and not a place of arms, and that consequently the troops and stores can only be intended for the use of our enemy, Tippoo Sultaun, we cannot permit them to be landed at Mahé, or at any port upon the coast of Malabar."

A week later Cornwallis received an official intimation more or less on the same lines from the Governor-General in Council :

" We have every reason to believe that the French government in this country will not be disposed to countenance the unwarrantable conduct of Tippoo, but if, contrary to our expectation, your cruisers should fall in with any vessels of that nation with a considerable number of troops on board or with a large quantity of military stores, on the Malabar coast, the commanders of which may pretend that they are going to their small factory at Mahé, we are of opinion that they should be informed that, if they please, they may proceed to Pondicherry, but that they cannot be permitted to land their troops or stores either at Mahé or at any port on the coast of Malabar, as we are convinced that, in that case, they must be intended for the use of our enemy, Tippoo Sultaun.

“The letters which the Governor of Columbo, Mr. Vander Graff, has written to the government of Fort St. George, express not only a friendly disposition towards us but an earnest concern for the protection of the Rajah of Travancore, on which perhaps the safety of the Dutch Settlement at Cochin may in great measure depend. He likewise mentions some intelligence which he has received of the number of troops at the Isles de France, and seems to give more credit than we do to the probability of French interference.

“We have requested him to keep a watchful eye on the French, and to forward to you any information which he may acquire.”

Writing to the Admiralty in February of this year, Cornwallis informs them that “Mons Macnamara had brought presents for Tippoo on board the *Thetis*.” He is, however, at that time sceptical of the idea that the French had any intention of assisting him, for he goes on to say :—

“Other French Frigates have also been reported to have been seen upon the Coast, but I can hardly suppose with a view to take part in the present dispute should it unfortunately be carried to any length. I do not learn that they (the French) have any intention to assist Tippoo Sultan, indeed he could not have taken a more unfavourable time to commence Hostilities, if he expected their Assistance. Capt. Byron informs me that the *Nymph* is to sail to-morrow for the Mauritius, and that the *Medusa* [both French Men of War] is at Pondicherry from whence she is to go to the same place, and that the Count Macnamara is going first to Chetiva to visit Tippoo, and to endeavour to persuade him to desist, and that he is [then] to sail immediately for the French Islands.”

The following March, Cornwallis received a letter from Count Macnamara announcing his return from visiting Tippoo. He sends a polite but firm reply :—

SIR,—

I am this moment honoured with your letter. Your very humane expressions relating to the English said at present to be with Tippoo Sultan, and the Honourable mention you are pleased to make of the English nation at large, demand I am sure my most sincere thanks. I apprehend nothing on the part of

the Sultan would occasion our putting aside the sword, which he has without the smallest pretence obliged us to draw, until he has been sufficiently chastised. I am much flattered with your Politeness, and I very sincerely hope that nothing will happen to break in upon the Harmony, which at present subsists between the two Nations, and I assure you, Sir, that the oftener we meet the more pleasure it will give me.

This letter appears to have sent Macnamara off again on a visit to Tippoo, whether to impart the news that the British meant to “sufficiently chastise” him, and assure him of French support, or again to endeavour to persuade him to make peace, is a matter for conjecture. But a few days later Cornwallis writes at length to the Admiralty, and states how he thought it advisable to stay at Tellicherry, so long as the French Men of War remained there, and also to shadow them, after his departure, with the *Phoenix*, whose Captain, however, is instructed to “remain on the most friendly footing with them.” He was beginning to get suspicious.

As to actual operations in the field, Cornwallis’s only information came from the Rev. Christopher Wells. This gentleman was a protégé of Sir Francis Drake, who had requested the Commodore to take him as Chaplain to the Squadron. How he came to be ashore it is not possible to say; judging by his first letter to the Commodore, he seems to have been taken up by the Governor-General, and given a roving commission, partly as a “padrè” to the forces and partly as an Intelligence Officer. He writes on March 30th from Madras:—

“Some months ago I gave you some information respecting Cheil Maig, the Polygar, who was committing depredations in the Carnatic, about Vellore and Arnee, to divert our attention from Tippoo’s operations to the Southward.

“I can now inform you from indubitable authority (from the very camp of the Polygar at the passes) that Tippoo has ordered that Polygar Cheil Naig to be the instrument to execute the most barbarous and cruel commands of that monster in the Carnatic. He has absolutely sent him a reinforcement of 2,000 horse, with positive orders to place emissaries in our camp near Wallajoubad, and the moment the army begins to move, to pour his horse and banditti into the Carnatic, and carry fire and sword in every

direction. I trust, however, that this government will in part prevent the evil, as I know there is this moment before them a proposal from a confidential servant of Cheil Naig for securing his person and putting him in our hands."

His next letter was written from "Camp within 3 days march of Tritchinopoly." After giving an account of serious defalcations on the part of one or two highly placed officials of the East India Company, in which one gentleman named Johnstone nearly got off with £120,000, he goes on to say that:—

"It is no more than probable that General Medows will immediately put himself at the head of the Army; the finest, perhaps, that ever appeared in India. When we reach Tritchinopoly, the Army will consist of sixteen thousand well disciplin'd troops: of which there will be one regiment of European Cavalry (and four of Native Cavalry) and no less than five regiments of European Infantry, besides European Artillery. There is (I trust) no doubt that Divine Providence will direct the issue to correspond with the justice of the cause, by the final Annihilation of the power and Usurpation of the cruel *Tippoo Sultan Behaudor*, as he stiles himself—or 'Tippoo the great,' or 'the great Sultan Tippoo.'"

It had been the original intention of the Governor-General to have taken command himself of the army against Tippoo, and indeed his previous military experience would have justified such a course. General Medows, also an officer of experience, had however been in the meanwhile appointed Governor of Madras, and it was decided to leave the conduct of operations in the field to him.

Cornwallis, early this year, had paid a fleeting visit to the Andamans, about which he had received such definite instructions. He was anxious to return there, and also to visit Prince of Wales Island. In view of the political situation at the time, he did not wish to leave the Mainland Coast again without consulting his brother, who, writing to him on March 8th, said:—

"I shall not at present enter into the merit of the different harbours, although upon the whole I am glad to find you are disposed to think favourably of Port Cornwallis."

He goes on to tell him of Sir Richard Strachan's arrival in the *Vestal*, and concludes by saying:—

"I should suppose that as soon as you may think your stay

no longer necessary on the Malabar coast you will proceed to Madras, and consult with Medows whether the fleet can give any assistance to his operations, which I should hardly think probable, and you will then take your measures in regard to going to the Andamans or Prince of Wales's Island as you shall judge most proper."

Before sailing he received a further letter from the Governor-General, who was still sceptical about the French aiding Tippoo, for he said :—

"I was very glad yesterday to receive your letter of the 27th ult., by which I saw that you did not intend to wait at Bombay for another letter from me. By the most authentic accounts from Mauritius, I am perfectly sure that we have nothing to fear from the French ; there can therefore be no objection to your going to Prince of Wales's Island and the Andaman, and coming afterwards to Bengal. I think however that it might be of use to have one or two Frigates left on the Coromandel Coast, and I should be of opinion that it would be right to send some ships back to the Malabar Coast as soon as the Monsoon will admit of it."

After detaching certain ships of his squadron to shadow the French, Cornwallis left Madras at the end of May, and on his arrival at Prince of Wales Island, he found more trouble brewing, this time with a Malay potentate. This matter, also the project for the formation of a new naval base in the east, will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER IV

1790

CORNWALLIS was back at Madras in July, where he found a long letter from his brother awaiting him :—

CALCUTTA, *June 13th*, 1790.

DEAR WILLIAM,—

I received your letter dated off Ceylon, and send this to meet you at Madras early in the next month according to your directions.

I do not see why the war with Tippoo should prevent your visiting Bengal. It appears to me that you should send at least two Ships to the Coast of Malabar, as early in the season as they can venture with safety on that coast, for it is probable that the operations on that side will commence either by an embarkation from Bombay or from Tellicherry, or perhaps from Both, and it may be proper to leave either a Frigate or Sloop at Madras until the middle of October, to bring any dispatch of importance that General Medows may have to send to me, or to perform any unforeseen service that the accident of war may produce, and after this it does not occur to me in the present state of the business that the Fleet can be rendered any further useful to our operations.

The situation of the French Government at Mauritius is truly deplorable, The Comte de Conway is obliged to borrow money at 60 and 70 per Cent., to prevent the four Battalions which are there from mutinying, in which case He and the principal Officers would be treated with the greatest indignity by the *Assemblée Nationale* established there, consisting of the tavern keepers and others of the lowest inhabitants of the Island ; and indeed I much doubt whether He would have been able to maintain his guard at all, if the “Patriots” were not in their

turn apprehensive of an insurrection of the Negroes, who are very numerous.

I shall not attempt to give you news of our Army, as you will get it rather fresher three weeks or a month hence at Madras.

Tippoo's money has occasioned some serious rubs in our treaty with the Marattas, which was not signed when I heard last from Poonah. The Minister however appears to adhere firmly to his engagements, and unless the opposite party can destroy his power, I have little doubt of every thing's going right. I should suppose you will hardly stay longer on the Coromandel Coast than to write a letter to Gen: Medows, and receive an answer with anything He may have to send to me ; perhaps you will communicate more easily with him by going or sending a Ship to Negapatam.

If you can let me know when I may expect you, I will have a proper Pilot looking out, and the Yacht in readiness at Diamond Harbour. Your old friend the *Filchasa* has met with two accidents that have nearly demolished her.

I am very impatient for the arrival of the next ship from England, which has been later than I expected.

The late season has been remarkably hot and dry, which added to a great deal of vexation has not made my time pass very pleasantly.

I am, Dear William, Your truly Affec^{ate} Brother,
CORNWALLIS.

With reference to the third paragraph of this letter, it is interesting to observe that *Compte de Conway* had already been given assistance by the Indian Government, for the previous April Cornwallis had received the following official notification from the Governor-General in Council :—

“I have the honour to inform you, that this Government has from Motives of liberality, been induced to furnish a small aid of money to relieve the pressing Distresses of the French Governor General at the Isle of France, and as it is of great importance for the quiet of that Colony, that this supply should reach the *Compte de Conway* with as little delay as possible, and there being no appearance of an early opportunity to convey it in any other manner, I have made use of the discretion that you gave me to employ the *Ariel* Sloop of war on any service that might

appear to me to be necessary, and I have directed Captain Moorsom to receive the above mentioned money on board the ship under his command, and unless he should receive different orders from you at Madras, where he was ordered to touch, to proceed with it to the Isle of France and to return to join you at Madras with all convenient dispatch."

He also found a letter awaiting him from the Rev. C. Wells. According to the first paragraph of this gentleman's letter, it would appear that, not only was he "Padrè" and Intelligence Officer to the Army, but a sort of private inquiry agent for the Navy as well. The letter is dated June 20th from the Camp at Carour :—

"I have (in addition to what I have already had the honour of communicating respecting the abuses in the several departments of the navy in the last war) to inform you that I find the sail-making branch afforded ample scope for speculation, and a very expensive one it was to the Government. Mr. de Souza (agent to Mr. Cuthbert) nominally superintended the business, but Mr. Cuthbert was the principal, and a master of a line of battle ship (I believe of the Flagship) personally directed the whole ; who, besides a handsome additional daily pay from the Government, actually received from Mr. Cuthbert douceurs to a very considerable amount.

"22nd.—This morning a body of the enemy's horse (in number about 600) appeared on the left flank of our camp and approached close to our outposts. The cavalry formed, and Col. Floyd, of the 19th regiment of dragoons, with two troops of that corps and five or six troops of native cavalry, marched in pursuit of them. In the meantime, these merciless wretches wantonly cut down all the poor followers of our camp they could see, who were out collecting firewood, straw, &c., and drove off some of our gun bullocks . . . burnt the stacks of straw, villages, &c., through which they passed. The enemy's horse made so precipitate a retreat into the enclosed part of the country that Col. Floyd could not overtake them.

"You have been, Sir, already apprised of the manner in which I was employed at Madras for some time previous to the army's taking the field. I flatter myself that the information I was enabled to transmit, contributed in some small degree to constitute that body of intelligence and facts which so amply

authorised the change in the Government of Fort St. George (by the removal of Messrs. Hollond and Maylor from the Council) which at length enabled the General [Medows] to take the field. In the meantime, the army was to be under the command of an officer inimical and unfavourably disposed towards Lord Cornwallis and Col. Ross [Military Secretary to Earl Cornwallis]. This fact I knew at that time and I determined to join and attend the army as long as it should seem expedient, for it was clear to me that, while Col. Musgrave was at the head of it, Lord C. and Col. R. would not receive regular information. The character of Col. M. seems to be a compound of pride, weakness, meanness, narrow jealousy, and peevishness added to no small share of avarice, which last propensity he was indulging in very freely when the General happily arrived."

The Rev. Wells wrote again on August 26th from Coimbatore, giving an account of the storming of Dindigul :—

1790, *August 26.* CAMP, COIMBATORE.

I have the honour of acquainting you that the strong and well-defended fortress of Dindigul surrendered to the detachment sent against [it] under Lieut.-Col. Stuart on the 22nd inst. Our batteries (of four 18-pounders and two 12's) opened on the 20th in the morning, but made no impression that day. On the 21st, in the afternoon, a breach was made, but it did not prove a practicable one. It was, however, deemed advisable to attempt the reduction by storm : accordingly Major Skelly, with the two flank companies of the 52nd regiment, and one company of the 1st European infantry and two native battalions, proceeded to the assault, but finding the wall upon the rubbish still more than breast high, they were obliged, after a very hot and well supported contest, to retire, with the loss of one officer of the 20th battalion, twenty-five Europeans killed and wounded, and about the same number of Sepoys.

The next morning, however, before they could resume the attack, the white flag appeared. The garrison agreed to surrender on being permitted to march out with their private property.

. . . In the Fort were found fourteen guns and a great quantity of ammunition and shot of every description and in every shape, and (what is very extraordinary) it appears that most of it

was made up at, and must have been sent from, Madras ! Twenty thousand cullums of Padda were also lodged in the fort. A cullum is about sixty measures.

Major Skelly had a narrow escape. A musket ball passed through his hat, but did him no injury. I had the honour in my last to inform you of the reduction of Errode, Col. Floyd, with three regiments of cavalry (the 19th, 3rd, and 5th), with a large body of infantry and artillery, have passed the river and are to reduce Sattamungalum and two other forts, and then seek Syed Sahib, who is sent back with his cavalry on this side the pass. It is expected that a force will go in a few days against Palaghautcherry. When that is reduced, it is supposed the whole army will ascent the Mysore country. The fortifications at Dindigul are new, and admirably executed.

One wonders if it was ever discovered how Tippoo's ally received artillery ammunition made in Madras ?

In another letter written a week later, Mr. Wells appeared to think that the defeat of Tippoo would be a comparatively easy undertaking ; he praises General Medows up to the skies and says :—

“ Heaven grant no accident befalls our good and worthy General ! If the command devolved on the second, I fear all would not be well.”

As things turned out, it was rather a pity it didn't !

About the same time Cornwallis also received a short letter from his brother, which tended to confirm Leveson-Gower's hint of possible trouble with Spain :—

“ The *Warren Hastings* Indiaman arrived here this morning. Grenville tells me that the King is perfectly well, that he thinks we shall avoid a war, and not abet our friend the King of Prussia in any unreasonable demands, and lastly, that he does not think Pitt has anything to fear from the dissolution of Parliament. Ross had a letter mentioning some ill humour with Spain, about an intended settlement of ours on California, but I suppose it must allude to the business of the two ships of ours which were taken by them.”

But a week later he received another letter from the same source in which the possibility of a Spanish war is taken more seriously :—

1790, *October 2.* CALCUTTA.*(Private.)*

I last night received letters overland from Mr. Dundas and Mr. Grenville, informing me of the great probability of a rupture with Spain, with directions from the latter for offensive operations from our settlements here, which the Mysore war, for the present at least, renders impracticable. As I conclude, from the circumstance I have mentioned, that if the war takes place, your squadron will be immediately re-inforced, it appears to me that you will probably assemble the ships without loss of time at Bombay, and if Sir Richard Strachan should come here, I shall send him to you.

I can hardly believe that the Spaniards will go to war with us, but their active preparations and the answers they have hitherto given to our claim of satisfaction for the ships which they captured in Nootka Bay are very suspicious.

I am sanguine enough to have some hopes of demolishing Tippoo by January next.

Three days later the Governor-General writes again to his brother :—

1790, *October 5.* CALCUTTA.*(Private.)*

I have received a letter from Mr. Grenville, dated the 13th of May, by the way of Suez, informing me that there was great reason to expect an immediate rupture with Spain, and describing a most extensive outline of operations to be undertaken by our forces from this country, which unfortunately the cursed Mysore war renders for the present absolutely impracticable.

We shall probably be able to form some guess by the middle of December whether it will be possible to spare any troops from India this season, even if we could only undertake a part of Mr. Grenville's plan ; and if, which I apprehend will be the case, it should not appear to be possible, you will very likely think it right to send cruisers.

I shall in a few days transmit a copy of Mr. Grenville's letter for your fuller information in the Company's cipher to Bombay, and I shall desire General Abercromby to give you the key to it,

and to direct the secretary to explain it to you. I do not see in the present situation of affairs that I can make any part of the preparation recommended by Mr. Grenville, except by salting some meat here, which may be used by the squadron to save what will be sent from England, as I understand that the meat salted here with the greatest care cannot be depended upon to last more than one year.

If Sir Richard comes here I shall send him immediately to join you at Bombay, and he shall bring you my private cipher, which you will find much more easy and expeditious than that of the Government's.

There are reports of a promotion of Admirals, including you, but as Mr. Grenville in his letter calls you Commodore, it certainly had not at that time actually taken place. Abercromby and Musgrave are Major Generals.

Cornwallis also received a communication from Grenville informing him that :—

“In consequence of the capture of some British vessels on the North West Coast of America by two Spanish ships of war, his Majesty has taken measures for augmenting his forces, although it is hoped that war will be averted.”

It is more than probable that the English Government, although war with Tippoo had been raging for six months, did not fully realize how serious an undertaking this was; otherwise it could hardly have been suggested by Grenville that the Indian Government should fit out an expedition against the Philippine Islands. This was the plan intended had war with Spain broken out.

Colonel Floyd, an officer in command of a column under General Medows, was heavily defeated by Tippoo in September of this year, and this made Grenville's idea still more impracticable. The hands of the Indian Government were full. Cornwallis was favoured by the Madras Council with a copy of General Medows' report of the disaster :—

CAMP AT VALADDY, 17 *Sept.*, 1790.

HONBLE SIR, AND GENTLEMEN,—

I am sorry to acquaint you with a Check that we have received, notwithstanding all the enterprize of Colonel Floyd,

assisted by great judgement. However, it is not of sufficient consequence I think to make us dejected; and tho' a loss, I hope not an irreparable one, and only calculated I hope to postpone—not prevent the great object of the War—"the crushing this cruel Tyrant and Usurper."

As it was impossible to think of ascending the Ghauts without collecting Magazines, or of subsisting our Army all together; Colonel Floyd commanded on the Bhawani River—three regiments of Dragoons, the Thirty sixth Regiment, and four Battalions of Sepoys, with the Artillery attached to these corps; for the purpose of collecting Grain at Sattemungulum which he had taken. Notwithstanding all our vigilance the Enemy came down quicker than our intelligence, and in such force that during the most gallant contest for two Days, in which it is conjectured the Enemy must have suffered very considerably, he was Obligated to retire, leaving behind some grain, Six Guns—owing to the Bullocks being Killed—and some baggage.

Upon my first intelligence, I immediately made a forward move. Had the intelligence been quick enough, I should probably have ensured his success: that not being the case, by forced Marches we have joined.

The Killed and most of the Wounded he has been obliged to leave behind him; amounting to about two hundred. Among the former, I am sorry to inform you, are Lieutenant Colonel Deare of the Bengal Artillery, Captain Hartley and Lieutenant Armstrong of the 36th Regiment, with the Assistant Surgeon Morris.

What further steps may be thought necessary, or further information, I shall have the honor of acquainting you with by the first Opportunity.

I have the Honor to be, Honble Sir and Gentlemen, With great respect, Your most Obedient, Humble Servant,

WM. MEDOWS.

Governor and Commander-in-Chief.

CHAPTER V

1790

STUDENTS of British-Indian history will remember that after the reverse sustained by Colonel Floyd, Medows by forced marches joined him, and fought an indecisive action with Tippoo, who retired, and was eventually pursued without success by Medows, who had been joined by Colonel Stuart's division at Coimbatore.

Colonel Maxwell, who was in command of another division, had in the meanwhile been more successful. On November 17, 1790, this officer was at Caveripatam, where on that date he was being hotly engaged by Tippoo, who, however, retired on the approach of Medows with his whole army. It was due to the hitherto negative results of the campaign that decided Earl Cornwallis to take upon himself the supreme command of the armies in the field. He was conveyed to Fort St. George on a British man of war [the *Vestal*, Sir R. Strachan]. In a private letter, dated November 30th, to Cornwallis, the Governor-General acquaints him with the fact :—

“ Our whole land force in this country must for the present be employed in the Mysore war, which I consider in so serious a light that I am on the point of embarking to take the direction of it into my own hands. During the continuance of this war, which I am now, if possible, more than ever anxious to see the conclusion of, you can have no co-operation from us, and consequently no expedition can be attempted even against Manilla, unless troops should be sent out for that purpose ; as by the letter of the 5th of June, we have reason to think they have thoughts of doing, from conceiving it probable by the accounts carried home by the *Goddard* Indiaman that we should be at war with Tippoo.”

Cornwallis wrote in answer to this :—

“ The *Atalanta* arrived the 13th from Madras, and the Dis-

patch tender the same day from Calcutta, by them both I am informed of Your determination to join the Army.

“I now very much lament the resolution I had taken of remaining on this side of India, as the Chief reason (the being in the way of a quicker communication with You at Calcutta) no Longer exists. I send the *Atalanta* back to attend your directions, and I will send the *Vestal* immediately upon Her joining me to the Malabar coast. There are at present two frigates and a sloop there, and if they should all come away, which is not intended, I will send one of the frigates back. I cannot very well Leave this place until the Stores and provisions arrive, unless I should be obliged to go to Prince of Wales Island, but if You will be so good as to inform me where You think I had best station myself in the present uncertain state of affairs for the purposes mention'd in Mr. Grenville's Letter, I shall most readily do it, and I am much obliged to You for what You have already said upon the subject of stationing the ships. I hope to God this exertion of Yours will have the desired effect, and put an immediate end to the war. All situations are alike to me. I consider Prince of Wales Island to be a better place for refreshments than Madras. We think we have chequed the scurvy, but some fevers have appear'd. I have had very satisfactory Letters from the Victualing office, &c, as to my transactions in regard to the supplies.

“Captⁿ Halsted says there was a French man at Madras who reported that both Conway and Macnamara were gone to France and that a Line of Battle Ship was expected at the Isle of France.”

Cornwallis, in the meanwhile, had received two letters from the Rev. Wells, who seems to have already learnt of the Governor-General's intention. Reading these letters one cannot help feeling that Mr. Wells was by nature intended more for the Army than the Church :—

CAMP, NEAR THE FORT OF PARAMUTTY—ON THE
NORTHERN BANKS OF THE CAVERI—9 MILES
FROM CARORE.

Nov. 27th, 1790.

SIR,—

I had the Honour of writing to you on the 17th Inst., when I acquainted you of our having on that date effected a Junction with the Army under Lt. Col. Maxwell; and indeed

our pursuit of Tippoo, and obliging him to abandon his views in that Quarter, relieved that Army from some dangers, to which, circumstanc'd as they were, they were certainly expos'd. I then informed you that Tippoo was supposed to have ascended the Ghauts. This proved to originate in one of those masterly wiles and stratagems of which he is very capable, and for which (as well as his whole military conduct) I give him great Credit. This report he caus'd to be circulated throughout all the neighbouring villages, and even placed Emissaries about our Camp to corroborate the tale. On the 18th however we marched on our return towards the Pass of Tuppoor and after two hours march saw a part of his Army making for the Pass from which we were only a few miles distant. This prov'd to be his Cavalry in ye rear covering his Guns and infantry then descending the Pass. We had opportunities of firing some Advanc'd Six pounders at them, and killed about 25 of them, but he effected his object, and got thro' the pass without further loss, except that of two Ammunition-Tumbrils, and one Gun which broke down in that very difficult pass. Could we have got up a strong part of our army to attack him while in the pass, we sh^d have had a fine Opportunity of *settling the business with him*.

He could have defended the narrow defiles at the bottom to great advantage, and we expected he w^d, *the next day*, have made a stand—but we were disappointed. We descended the Pass the next Morning, and found no Enemy to oppose us : He had retired rapidly, and took the route to this country—the Valley of *Namkal*, to join a large detachment of his forces under *Conradin Cawn*, who had been in our absence spreading desolation between Carore and Trichinopoly. Tippoo is now on this side the river. It is suppos'd a division of this Army will take place. A strong part will remain to move as he moves, and the other go with the General up the Ghauts into the Mysore Country. But, Sir ! all this will now depend on Lord Cornwallis, who I find, from very good Authority, has sail'd from Bengal for Madras with a considerable force, and is probably arriv'd there by this time. His Lordship's presence alone will have a tendency to put a speedy conclusion to the War. Vested, as He is, with a plenitude of power, He can receive, and accede to, or reject, without *loss of time* (and loss of *time* is an immense loss of *treasure*), any proposals which the Enemy may make—or, as he is at the head

of a very fine Army, to enforce his own terms of Accommodation. This Step of his Lordship's, I can assure you, Sir! gives universal satisfaction,—and, as far as I can form an opinion of things, the Enemy will eagerly seize this opportunity of offering, or acceding to, terms the most favourable to the British Interests, and productive of permanent Tranquility.

It will be appreciated by this letter how Tippoo had outwitted Medows, and doubled back through the same pass the latter had crossed but a few days before.

The other letter from Wells is dated December 13th:—

CAMP, NORTH OF THE CAVERI & COLEROON,
NEARLY OPPOSITE TO TRITCHINOPOLY.

Dec. 13th, 1790.

SIR,—

I did myself the Honour of writing to you on the 6th, 17th & 27th Ulto. acquainting you with our progressive motions; the junction of the two Armies—our return (with the whole united force) to the Banks of the Caveri nearly opposite to Carore, and the Governor General having announc'd his intention of coming to the Carnatic immediately, having already sent Capt. Kidd and Capt. Robinson before Him to make some preparations for his Lordship's Accomodation.

Tippoo had mov'd down near this place, merely to raise an alarm for the Safety of Tritchinopoly, and to lead us farther from the Mysore Country, for the sake of delay and procrastination.

The whole of our Army mov'd to this place a few days ago, not only to throw a strong reinforcement into Tritchinopoly, but also to draw from thence, wth the greater expedition, those Supplies of Provisions and Stores which we stand in need of for our march up into Mysore. Besides which in our present Situation Lord Cornwallis, who is hourly expected round to Negapatam, can join the Army with safety and expedition from that part of the Coast, coming by the way of Tanjore. Tippoo upon our approach remov'd from this Neighbourhood, and is now encamp'd about 25 miles from us to the Northward, still showing a disposition to lead us on into the Carnatic after Him; but in that he will no longer be indulg'd. It has long been Lord

Cornwallis's Opinion that the War sh^d be vigorously carried into the *heart* of *Mysore* to the *Walls of Seringapatam*. The General has for sometime adopted the resolution, and every preparation is now making to be ready to pursue that System as soon as Lord Cornwallis arrives. Tippoo will then be drawn off from this Country, in which he will *not* fight us, into the centre of his own dominions, where He *must* risque a battle if he designs to *releve his Capital*. This will decisively and, I hope, expeditiously and successfully terminate the War.

When Lord Cornwallis arrives I will acquaint you with the event, and have the Honour to remain, with the greatest Respect and Gratitude, Sir ! Your most obliged and devoted Servant,

CHR. WELLS.

Both in strategy and cunning Medows was no match for Tippoo. Wells was too loyal to the General to say as much, but the fact that he tells the Commodore that the arrival of the Governor-General should soon terminate the war leads one to suppose that he thought it.

Just before leaving for the front, Earl Cornwallis wrote again to the Commodore :—

DEAR WILLIAM,—

I yesterday received your letter of the 15th by the *Atalanta*.

I have ordered Medows who is at Tritchinopoly with the whole army to march to the Northward, near to our western frontier, and I intend to move from hence so as to join him when he comes opposite to the passes thro' which I mean to penetrate into the Mysore Country, taking with me such of the Bengal reinforcements as shall have arrived, some money and iron eighteen pounders.

Our force, if we manage it properly, is fully equal to the task required ; our allies are making greater exertions than they have hitherto done, and Abercromby, who is at Tellicherry, altho' his force is small, will, by the help of the Nairs and others of Tippoo's discontented subjects and tributaries, be able to make a powerful diversion.

If, by our combined efforts, and nothing in my power shall be wanting to call them forth, we can get honorably and advan-

tageously out of this cursed war before the setting in of the Malabar rains, we may still, if the quarrel with Spain should not be made up, look boldly this year at Manilla ; for which place I understand that our armament should sail from hence in the months of July or August ; I am not sufficiently informed on the subject of the navigation of the South Sea, to know the proper seas for attempting to execute the Minister's further plans.

I kept Sir Richard (Strachan) here a few days, not being sure that I should not go myself to Negapatam, and I do not now care to let him go from the road before the Army leaves Tritchinopoly, lest my intended plan should be laid too open, by it's being known that I do not mean to join the army to the southward.

As soon as the *Vestal* can leave this place with propriety, I shall, from what you have said, send Sir Richard directly to Tellicherry, to wait for your orders, which you may have frequent opportunities of communicating to him by sea from Prince of Wales's Island, or by land from this place. I had great difficulty to make him take the freight on three lacks of rupees which were put on board by Larkin's advice, in order to divide the risk. . . .

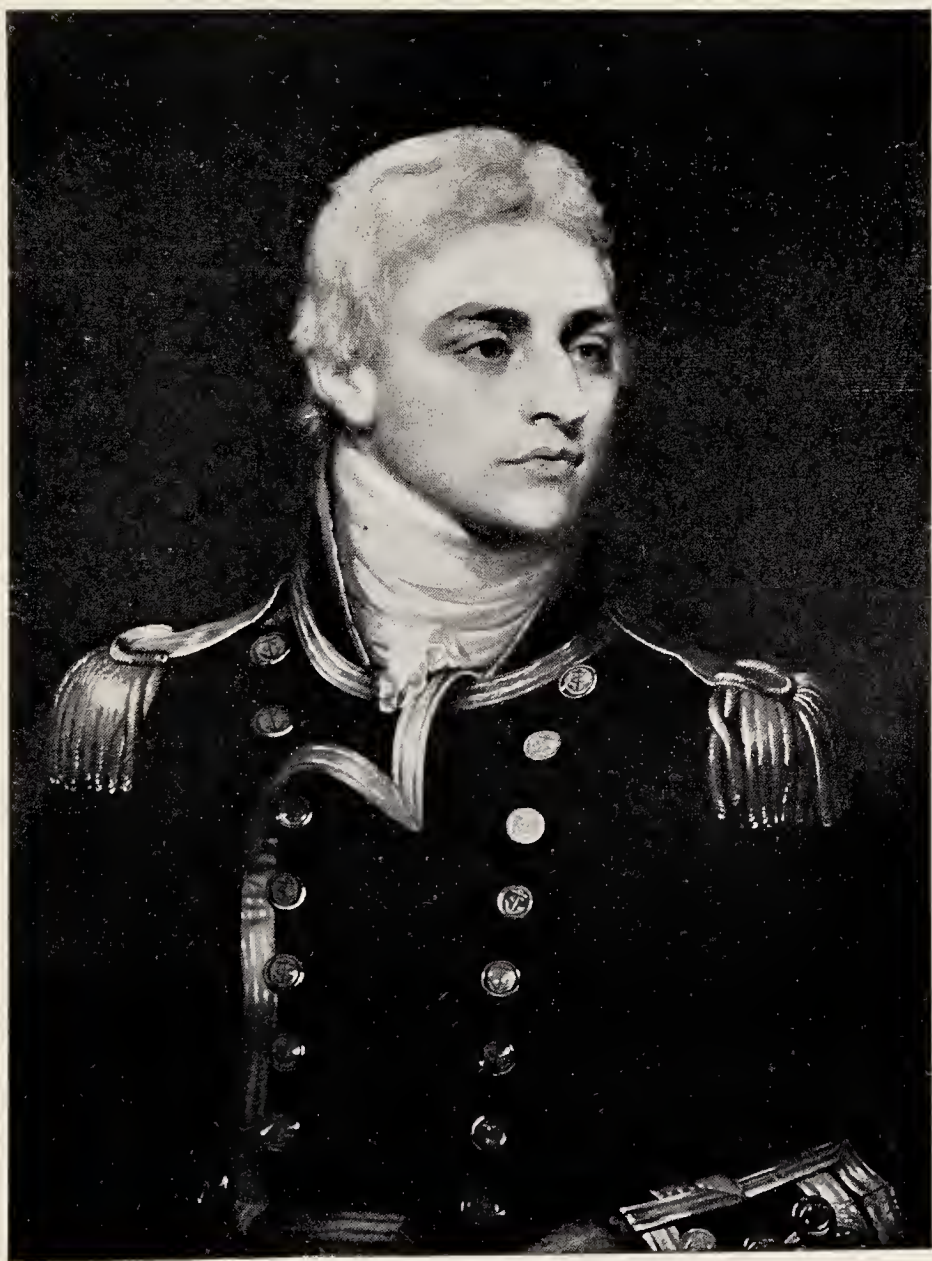
If our war should have an appearance of drawing to a conclusion by the end of March or beginning of April, and the Spanish business should go on, it may be worth your while to consider whether it would not be advisable that you should go yourself, or send some very trusty person to Bombay to secure transports, for it is from thence at that advanced season of the year that we must principally look for them ; There can be no doubt from Mr. Grenville's letter that we shall get Salt provisions enough from England for a Manilla expedition. All my family present their best respects, and I beg to be kindly remembered to King and Whitby, the Commander of His Majesty's Schooner *Dispatch*.

I am, Dear William, Your truly affectionate Brother,
CORNWALLIS.

The Governor-General mentions the difficulty he had in persuading Sir Richard Strachan to ship three lakhs of rupees on board the *Vestal*. This forms the subject of an entertaining correspondence between Sir Richard and the Commodore. The latter strongly objected to one of H.M. ships of war accepting

freight even though it were bullion. But when he receives a draft from the shipping agents for 3,172 rupees in payment of freight charges it is altogether too much for him ; he considers he has been treated as a Merchant Captain, and asks his superior officer what he is to do with the money ? He is wisely told to bank it.

The first mention is made of Lieutenant Whitby in this letter. This officer had been placed in command of H.M. Sloop *Dispatch*, and his name appears on several occasions later. From the very first the Commodore took a liking to this young officer, although he was very many years his junior. He was first his Flag-Lieutenant, and then his Flag-Captain. They were almost inseparable until Captain Whitby's death in 1806.



CAPTAIN JOHN WHITBY.

From a painting by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of the author.

CHAPTER VI

1791

THANKS to the wise diplomacy of Charles IV of Spain, war was averted, and a convention between the two nations was signed in November 1790. Confirmation of this joyful news did not arrive in India until April of the following year. That it was a relief to the minds of those who were engaged in the conduct of operations against Tippoo is apparent by the following letter from General Sir Robert Abercromby to the Commodore :—

CAMP, 30th April, 1791. *One o'clock p.m.*

DEAR SIR,—

I have the pleasure to send you enclosed an Extract of a Letter from Lieut. H. Fox Calcroft, which has been sent to me, officially, by the Bombay Government. I most heartily congratulate you on the good News, at this most critical period of the War with Tippoo.

I shall dispatch a Messenger to Lord Cornwallis immediately.

I have the honor to be, Dear Sir,

Your most obedient and very faithful Servant,

ROBT. ABERCROMBY.

The extract from Lieutenant Calcroft's letter confirms the signing of the convention between Spain and England, and mentions that :—

“Lord Howe struck his flag on the 18th Nov. (1790), and orders were given for disarming the Fleet, the largest and best provided we ever had at sea.”

The curious part about this letter is that it was dated January 12, 1791, from Lattakieh (off the coast of Syria) and addressed to the British Consul at Aleppo. What means the latter took to get it to Bombay is not recorded.

Previous to this, Colonel Ross had written to Cornwallis from Fort George, to which place he had accompanied his Chief. He evidently did not think there was much chance of war breaking out, for he concluded his letter by saying :—

“I beg to be remembered to Mr. Bennicke and to Whitby and King—and as no accounts are yet come of this Spanish War, that the two latter gentlemen talked so much about, I dare say they would now be glad to take a few good fresh Cocoa-Nuts for their share of prize money for the next twelvemonth.”

To which Cornwallis replied :—

“King and Whitby send compliments, and, if the Spanish war should go on, Whitby says he should hold your fifty pounds very cheap. He is quite well and ready for anything.”

Cornwallis, in the meanwhile, had received several interesting letters from England giving him details of the preparations that had been made by the Navy to deal with the situation. Hood, writing in June of the previous year, said :—

“We have been preparing for war against Spain a month, and I have the pleasure to say we have now all the guardships at Spithead completely manned, with the addition of the *Victory* ; and, in four or five days more, the *Princess Royal*, *Illustrious*, *Saturn*, *Courageous*, and *Valiant* will be there also ; and I imagine they will all be at sea the end of next week. Admiral Barrington has his flag in the *Barfleur*, Sir Alexander Hood [afterwards Lord Bridport] in the *Victory* for the present, until the *Royal George* and *London*, the ships fitting for them, are ready. Admiral Hotham’s and Sir John Jervis’s [afterwards Lord St. Vincent] flags are also flying ; and, I imagine, all will be put to sea together, under the command of Barrington. The *Queen Charlotte* is fitting for Lord Howe, and will be at Blackstairs on the 10th. Sir Richard King commands in the Downs, and Dalrymple at the Nore. Should we come to blows, which at present is very uncertain, you will have full employment. Lord Chatham proposes sending to you a good seventy-four and two or three stout frigates.”

In the following December he again wrote on the same subject :—

“I have received the several letters you have had the goodness to honour me with, for which I give you ten thousand thanks.

“Early in May we began to arm against Spain, and with such vigour and exertion that in five months we had such a fleet as this country never had before after being at war two years. A most uncommon zeal pervaded all ranks of people, and there was a cheerfulness and spirit in the seamen not to be expressed, which most certainly have produced most happy results. Gardner was in the grand fleet under Lord Howe, consequently my head and hands were full. Spain had been tampering with the Northern powers; a Baltic squadron was therefore to be prepared and to assemble in the Downs. This was to be entrusted to me, and I went to Deal for three days to give a few orders and to put the squadron, consisting of sixteen sail of the line, under the command of Admiral Elliot, to get it in condition for service. Except upon this occasion, I was not out of the Admiralty Court five hours from the beginning of May until towards the latter end of last month; and, although we have disarmed with respect to Spain, it is thought right to keep up ten ships of the line (four of which of three decks), in addition to the sixteen guardships and six sail which went to the West Indies under Cornish, since recalled; and I hope and trust we shall see a general peace in Europe in the course of a very few months. I know you will hear from Lord Chatham, to whom I communicated what you said to me respecting your leaving India about this time twelve-month without waiting to be relieved, which he appeared to approve, but probably the present disturbance with Tippoo will prove an obstacle to it.”

It will be remembered that in 1789 Austria and Russia were at war with Turkey. After the death of the Austrian Emperor Joseph, his successor, Leopold, concluded a separate peace with the Porte. Catherine of Russia decided to prosecute the war alone, and did so with considerable success. In 1790 it was the policy of the rest of Europe, apart from France, to endeavour to persuade Catherine to make peace. It was considered advisable to uphold the Turkish Empire, in the hopes of checking the dangerously rapid progress which revolutionary tendency was making in both France and Poland. England was the most powerful nation which attempted mediation between Russia and Turkey, and it was for this reason she maintained her fleet at war-strength although she had no longer anything to fear from Spain.

In the following letter Hood's forecast was correct, as Catherine refused mediation :—

“Notwithstanding matters are made up with Spain, we have still thirty-two sail of the line in commission, with a dozen extra frigates, in order to bring the Empress of Russia to a reasonable peace with the Turks ; but I am apprehensive she will be obstinate, and persevere in the war. . . .

“When the convention with Spain took place, it was necessary to reduce our seamen from fifty thousand to twenty-four thousand. The Admiralty thought it, therefore, a proper attention to the commercial interest of this country to give out the order I herewith send, which certainly could not mean to include any volunteer, or indeed any one who had not an advantageous prospect before him at the time he was impressed. But, to the astonishment of the Board, a few Captains indiscriminately discharged every man who would give in his name ; the consequence of which was, that some ships were left so weak as not to have a sufficient number of men to take care of them at Spithead. As seamen follow one another, as a flock follows a bell-sheep, the infection spread and almost every man became anxious to be his own master.” . . .

Cornwallis had written to Howe to congratulate him on his having been appointed to command the fleet, and received the following amusing reply :—

“You do me much honour in the satisfaction you express on the knowledge of my late appointment to command the home fleet, on the prospect at that time of a rupture with Spain. Though conscious of my many incapacities, yet as the King condescended to think them not a sufficient objection to my acceptance of that important charge, it remained with me only to consider how I could best endeavour to execute His Majesty's commands. If our existing disputes terminate in the same manner, the next selection of naval commanders will probably be directed to some amongst you gentlemen of more active abilities ; for I am of opinion that a gouty chair, in which Sir George Rooke is said to have been confined at the battle of Malaga, is not a well adapted situation for the director of a considerable fleet in these days.”

When Howe wrote this he had evidently recovered from the illness which Nelson mentions in the following letter written to

Cornwallis, dated April 4th, from Burnham. He, too, was of the same mind as Hood as regards Russia :—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

I thank you much for your kind letter of August last, which I received when a few days ago in London. We are again preparing for war, some think we shall succeed in making the Empress yield to such terms of peace as we think proper without hostilities, but I own myself of a different opinion. She has been compared, and not I think unaptly, to our Elizabeth; a high-spirited, victorious woman will not easily brook to us, and how we are to get at her fleet I don't see. If inferior to us, she will lock them up in Cronstadt, where our ships cannot get, and if, as is believed, Sweden joins her in the Baltic, we may, although assisted by the Dutch (in whom I don't find we ever much benefited), not be able to cope with her. Narrow seas and no friendly ports are bad things. . . .

I hope we are not to have Spain against us, which is feared. If so we have plenty of work cut out. The Duke of Clarence expects if a fleet goes up the Mediterranean to command a division of it; I can assure you he always mentions you with the highest respect. I was not successful enough in the late armament to get a ship, I hope not to be again so unfortunate. Lord Howe has been seriously ill, and Admiral Barrington very much shook; age will creep on, and active service soon gives a shake when above 60; comfortable and strong in their elbow chairs, but feeble when tossed in the Bay of Biscay. . . .

You have heard of the opinion relative to Sir Roger Curtis when Captain of the Fleet sitting on Court Martial as a Rear-Admiral; that a Court Martial being formed by Act of Parliament, it is not in the King's power by any local rank to alter its constitution, and that therefore the one Court held where Sir Roger sat is illegal. An Act of indemnity is I hear to be passed, brought forward by Sir John Jervis, who, by-the-bye, is said not to be employed, as having very much reprobated the Spanish Convention; and his friend the Marquis of Lansdown is so strong an antiministerial man. Mr. Pitt, it is thought, will lose his interest with the monied men for taking the unclaimed dividends, and a great opposition is made against going to war with Russia, but as yet he holds a great majority.

I assure you it would have given me infinite pleasure to have served under you, and to have zealously supported the good plans you have formed. During the little time I was senior officer at Antigua, 11 per cent. was had for bills more than before or since I understand. A merchant came and had the impudence to offer me 5 per cent. if I would let him have the bills when money was wanted. How can stations otherwise give fortunes? I, amongst your numerous friends, will be truly rejoiced to see you in England, for believe I am, with most sincere attachment, your faithful and affectionate,

HORATIO NELSON.

Nelson's letter was in answer to one from Cornwallis written the previous August. This gives a good idea of how the latter liked serving in the East, and how much more he preferred the sailor's to the social side of life. It reads:—

DEAR NELSON,—

I thank you very much for your kind remembrance of me. I confess this is a pleasant station in many points, and I believe if one was inclined to enter into the spirit of it, all would go very smooth. I lament very much that as I recollect you had some time past a great inclination to come to this country, that a change of circumstances made it impossible for me to think of proposing it to you upon my appointment, for I do declare that it would have been a great happiness for me to have had you upon this station.

I sail about a great deal. The visiting our new Settlements at Prince of Wales Island and the Andamans gives an opening for exploring, which I prefer to being stuck up in a pompous style at one of the old ones.

The sailing upon the Malabar Coast during the N.E. Monsoon is very delightful, the weather at that season is so totally free from squalls. Our Royal Duke [The Duke of Clarence] is I hear almost tired of the shore, but how he will be able to employ himself in time of peace at sea is not easy to determine; it would however be a pity that any of the zeal and fondness he has so evidently shewn for the service should be suffered to abate, as there is every reason to believe that with his ability he will one day carry its glory to a greater height than it has yet attained. I

am glad my friend Gardner has been called to the Admiralty, Tho' I was sorry for the death which occasioned the vacancy. [Sir Francis Drake died in October 1789.] My hearty good wishes attend you and Mrs Nelson for every enjoyment and comfort this world can afford, being, my dear Nelson, ever most faithfully yours,

W. CORNWALLIS.

[Add. MSS. Brit. Mus.]

To return to the war with Tippoo, Earl Cornwallis assumed the command of the Army at the end of January this year. He determined at once to lay siege to Bangalore. This fortress was stormed and captured on March 21st. The Rev. C. Wells, who was still carrying on the same duties, wrote an excellent account to Cornwallis of this operation. It is of interest and, although not a naval matter, is given in full :—

(EXTRACT.)

1791, *March* 24. CAMP AT BANGALORE.

The army arrived before Bangalore on the 5th inst., and were cannonaded on the march by Tippoo; not a shot was returned, but he was treated with sovereign contempt. On the 6th, the engineers reconnoitred the Fort and Pettah, both found much stronger than expected. On the ensuing morning the latter was carried by storm; Col. Moorhouse and Capt. Delaney were killed, some officers wounded, but none mortally. In the evening of the same day (at two o'clock), Tippoo's army appeared in sight, and whilst he endeavoured to divert the attention of our line by cannonading it, he sent a very large force to storm and retake Pettah, but was beat off by the 36th regiment and some Sepoy corps, with considerable loss. Lord Cornwallis, suspecting he would make a second attempt, sent a re-inforcement to the Pettah, who had scarcely got there ere the enemy stormed it again. As before, they were repulsed, but with a much greater loss on their side. Finding himself foiled in both attempts, he drew off his guns and retreated about sunset, and we saw no more of him till St. Patrick's day, when he paid us an unexpected visit between eight and nine in the morning, and threw long shot at us till near three, when he retired, not having been able to

draw us out or divert our attention from the siege. In the whole of the cannonading we lost very few men, not above sixty altogether. Five batteries, having irregular approaches, having been made, but their effect not being equal to what was expected, and our provisions beginning to run short, it was determined by the Earl to storm the fort. This was done on the 21st, at night, and in two hours from the commencement of the attack the British colours were flying in it. The storming party consisted of the 36th, 72nd, and 76th regiments, supported by the European flank companies of the army and 2nd battalion of Sepoys. They descended and ascended the ditch by scaling ladders, which were of infinite service afterwards, as the breach was nearly impracticable; upwards of 1,500 of the enemy were put to the bayonet; Captain Markham and Lieut. Dark of the Artillery wounded. The force of the garrison was about 3,000.

The Killidar, a very old man and nearly related to Tippoo, was killed (Bahawder Cawn). Upwards of one hundred pieces of cannon were mounted in the rampart, which is a double one; the Fort is remarkably strong, very extensive, and has a very deep, broad, dry ditch and glacis to it. The fort could never have been taken but by an European army; it is the strongest I ever saw in India except Madras.

The palace is in the centre of the Fort, and one of the most superb grand buildings you can conceive; it reminds you of the castles mentioned in the fairy tales. Had the storm been delayed twenty-four hours the whole of our batteries would have been enfiladed by works he was constructing. Lord Cornwallis has shown himself a most able general, and Medows is an admirable second. They are both adored, and justly so, by every man in the army.

After his success at Bangalore, Earl Cornwallis attempted the reduction of Seringapatam. The Commodore's correspondent on this occasion was not Mr. Wells. A person of the name of James McHorath had written an account of the attack to the Postmaster at Madras, who evidently thought it proper to send a copy to the Naval Commander-in-Chief, whose ship was lying in the Roads. Mr. McHorath concluded his letter by saying:—

“The Enemy gave way in every quarter, excepting on Pagoda Hill, which they seem resolved to maintain. . . . This has been

a smart business. The enemy were strongly posted, and their Infantry stood to be bayoneted. But our troops with his Lordship at the head are irresistible."

This attack failed and Earl Cornwallis was obliged to retire to Bangalore and wait until the following November before renewing it. Writing from his camp on July 5th, "13 miles west of Bangalore," to his brother, he said :—

"I have just received your letter of the 27th ultimo, and am much obliged to you for the good accounts you send me of my family, which are the first that have reached me. I cannot proceed against Seringapatam until the rains are over on the Malabar coast, and the Caverry river falls, and I hope by that time to make such arrangements as will provide for the subsistence of our army and our numerous allies ; but it is no easy task to feed between two and three hundred thousand men, one hundred thousand horses, and twice that number of bullocks, besides elephants and camels, in a country which nature intended for a desert, and which Tippoo has, with the assistance of our friends the Marattas, rendered a complete one."

CHAPTER VII

1791

IN April of this year further friction with the French arose, this time with the Governor of Mahé, who objected to Cornwallis sending his officers to visit French Merchant ships to take off British seamen on board them. It may be owing to the grave suspicion he had that the French were surreptitiously assisting Tippoo that he was not quite so polite as usual. His letter to the Frenchman is dated April 29th from Tellicherry Road :—

SIR,—

I have received your letter in which you express your Surprise at my sending Officers on board the French Merchant Ships to demand seamen, subjects of his Brittanic Majesty. I beg leave to observe that English Men of War are at all times instructed so to do, and that it was done last year, when the greatest civility past, very different from the reception my Officer reports to have met with yesterday. I do not very well understand what is meant by appearing to doubt my real object. The Officer was sent in consequence of two English seamen having just made their escape from one of these French ships.

I flatter myself that you will immediately deliver up every English seaman in your possession, without obliging me to take steps which would be disagreeable to me at all times but particularly so just now, and that you believe it will give me pleasure to shew Civility and Attention to those of your Nation, whenever an opportunity offers.

I am, Sir, Your most obedient and very humble servant,
W. CORNWALLIS.

The French seem to have immediately complied with this demand, as two days after Cornwallis writes to the East India

Company's official at Tellicherry telling him that he has received "several English seamen from the French ships at Mahé," and requesting him to make provision to receive those that "are ill and unfit for the King's service."

The most serious friction that arose with the French during the years 1791-2 was on account of Cornwallis's insistence on the "Right to search Neutral Vessels." This he carried out to the fullest extent, but not without bloodshed, as will be shown. In May of this year both Chatham and Hood wrote to Cornwallis. In neither of these letters were any definite instructions given to search neutral ships for contraband of war. Both seem to have taken it for granted that he would do all he could to prevent supplies reaching Tippoo; measures against this he had, of course, already taken.

Chatham, in his letter, talks of cutting down the establishment of Cornwallis's Squadron "now that peace is assured," and of bringing him home the following year at the same time that Earl Cornwallis's term of office expired. The time occupied in sending and receiving dispatches, between the two countries, was so great that it was impossible for a First Lord to send orders to his subordinate concerning matters, the situation of which might have entirely changed by the time those orders arrived. News of Earl Cornwallis's reverse had not, of course, arrived in England, and the seriousness of the situation in India could not possibly have been realized. Chatham wisely adds as a rider to his suggestions, "matters must entirely depend on your judgement according to the actual state of things there."

Hood, in his letter, said :—

1791, May 13. ADMIRALTY.

You will receive orders by the *Bridgewater* (which I wanted you to have some months ago . . . although I was pretty sure you would prevent the stores going to Tippoo if you could) with respect to supplies sent from France to Tippoo Sultan's army.

We have had extraordinary proceedings in the House of Commons, which have produced a total separation of Burke from Opposition. . . .

As the result of these orders received from Hood, which were the first definite instructions he had had from

the Admiralty to search neutral vessels, Cornwallis issued the following :—

DATED ON BOARD THE “CROWN,”
AT TRINCOMALE,

TO THE “MINERVA,” “PHŒNIX,”
AND “VESTAL.”

30 August 1791.

Intelligence having been received that there are ships coming from Europe, particularly an American ship called the *Enterprise* from Ostend, laden with arms and ammunition supposed to be for the use of our enemy, Tippoo Sultan, and having already sent the *Thames* and *Vestal* to Tillicherry, you are to employ the Men of War in short cruises upon the coast, and you are to seize and detain all ships and vessels upon that coast, You may find laden with warlike stores, to whatever Port they may be bound, except Dutch and Portuguese actually destined to Cochin or Goa.

Another Order was to the effect :—

“If any French ship should be discovered going under Convoy of Men of War, or otherwise, they are to be examined, and should it prove that they have any considerable number of troops on board, or be laden with arms or ammunition, they are to be told in the politest manner that as Mahé is not a place of arms, but an inconsiderable factory, it cannot be supposed that such troops, arms or ammunition are really intended for that place—but to assist our enemy, Tippoo Sultan. You are hereby required and directed not to suffer them to be landed, but to see such ship or vessels so laden clear of this coast.”

In May of this year he was reinforced by the *Leopard* and the *Thames*, the *Minerva* having already arrived. The *Leopard*, however, returned in July to act as convoy to troopships conveying Hanoverian troops back to England, where it is presumed they were required owing to the uncertainty of the political horizon. In his letter to Lord Grenville and to the Admiralty, written in August of this year, Cornwallis gives the dispositions of the various ships of his Squadron, arranged so as to be best able to prevent supplies reaching Tippoo by sea.

On September 12th he writes to the Admiralty :—

“I have sent the *Minerva*, *Thames* and *Vestal* to cruize upon the Malabar Coast to intercept any supplies, which from accounts

received there is reason to believe are being sent from Europe for the use of our Enemy, Tippoo Sultan."

A month later he receives from the Admiralty a further description of the ships engaged in carrying these supplies, but in answer to this letter states that up to date (October 26th) :—

"The Men-of-War have not yet met with any ship laden with warlike stores ; which I have ordered them particularly to look after."

In October of this year relations between the French and English over the latter's determination to carry out their declared "Right to search" became very strained. In view of all that happened during the late war [1794-18] with reference to this important matter, it is of interest to give much of Cornwallis's correspondence on the subject, both with the Admiralty and the various French Commanders.

An incident occurred at Mahé when the Commander of H.M.S. *Atalanta* exceeded his instructions when searching some French Merchant vessels at that place. The French Commandant remonstrated, and Cornwallis apologized more or less.

The following are the letters written by the Commodore to the Commandant ; the latter's to him do not appear to be in existence :—

"CROWN," TELLICHARRY ROAD,
31st Oct., 1791.

SIR,—

I have received the Honor of Your Letter relative to the English Frigates having enquired some particulars of the lading of some Ships under French Colours upon their arrival off Mahé.

I should be extremely sorry, Sir, that any improper Conduct should have passed upon that occasion,—My Orders to the Captains of the King's Ships are to act and to ask with the utmost politeness. You must be aware of the necessity we are under, having been drawn into an unprovoked War by Tippoo Sultaun, to guard against His obtaining the supplies, of which Information has been received, and I should have hoped that those on board the Ships of a Nation at Peace with the King, my master, would have readily answered such common Questions as are usually asked without any difficulty. If the King's Ships acted in any way improperly at which offence could be taken, I am very sorry for it, and should be particularly so, if it were possible for you to

think that any affront was intended—the Senior Captain in the *Minerva* was not very well, and the Captain of the *Atalanta* Sloop, being a Young Man, might perhaps have gone rather further than Prudence should have dictated, and I shall signify to Him my disapprobation. I have no doubt but you will have the goodness to attribute any little impropriety to its true Cause, I lament most exceedingly my having sailed, just before the Arrival of the Ships, and I beg you to be assured that I shall repeat my Orders to the Captains of the King's Ships under my Command to act with the utmost politeness and Friendship to the Ships of Your Nation in particular, and that I am, Sir, with much respect, your most Obed., Humble Serv.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

The letter is addressed to Monsieur Sarcher, Commandant at Mahé.

The French Commandant was not satisfied, and Cornwallis again writes :—

“I am extremely sorry to find by your last Letter that you conceive the Letter I had the Honor of writing to you in answer to your first was not satisfactory. You were pleased in that letter to ask whether it was war—I apprehend mine was fully an answer to that, when I declared No affront was intended. I am assured no sword was drawn, nor did any Mischief ensue, anything improper that might have passed was, as I am informed, occasioned by the very uncivil Language and Behaviour of those on board the French Ship.

“I beg you will be so good as to acquaint me whether you persist (after the Assurance I have given) in reporting the matter to your Nation at Home, as it will in that case be necessary that I should state the matter to my Court.

“Your answer to that one Question will greatly oblige.”

The Commandant was evidently still dissatisfied, for the Commodore was obliged to write a third time :—

“I received the Honour of your Letter last night. I apprehend the Question you are at present pleased to ask was very fully answered in my first Letter, where I said I should signify my disapprobation of the conduct of the Commander of the *Atalanta*, which surely implied that I did not think He had Done what was right, as I think my Answer to your first Letter ought

to have been considered fully satisfactory. I really only wished that you would have the goodness to favor me with your determination, that I might transmit the Affair to my Court at the same time, in order that none might be lost, the distance being so great. But I dare believe that you hold it to be quite unnecessary, being well assured that no affront or mistake was intended."

Cornwallis now felt certain that the French were actively assisting Tippoo. He had received the following letter from a Secret Service agent at Mahé :—

"A French Ship arrived here yesterday and I have every reason to believe from information I have obtained that she has a Quantity of Warlike Stores on board. She will find it difficult to land any here, but it is probable that she may attempt it farther to the Southward."

The following November matters are brought to a climax by the shedding of blood. Sir Richard Strachan was the senior Captain present at the engagement, whose report Cornwallis sent to the Admiralty with a covering letter of his own :—

"MINERVA," TELlicherry ROAD,
22nd Novr., 1792.

SIR,—

I am sorry to relate to you for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a Circumstance which happened on the 18 Instant. Just before it was light on that Morning, being at anchor in Tellicherry Road in the *Minerva*, I perceived several vessels in the offing, upon which I sent an Officer to the *Phoenix* and *Perseverance*, with orders to examine any Merchant Ships, but not to meddle with Men of War, if any of those in view should prove to be such, and when it was light enough, I made the signal for those Ships to weigh, and examine strange ships passing near the Squadron. A French Frigate at this time stood out from Mahé. They were all soon out of sight of me. I enclose the Account Sir Richard Strachan gives of the French Frigate having attacked Him, and of what passed on the Occasion. I also enclose Copies of all the Orders which I have given relating to stopping ships upon the Coast, the first was given with the advice of the Governor-General, the others were given after I arrived upon this Coast, from A Desire to act with moderation, and if possible to prevent Disputes with Foreign Powers.

Sir Richard Strachan appears to have acted upon the same principle, and received the discharge of the French Frigate's Guns twice, before He would make any return, and had sent an Officer on board to explain, in Hopes of preventing the fatal effects of the French Captain's violence. When Sir Richard Strachan could no longer remain quietly, and see His Men destroyed by the fire of the French Frigate, the *Phoenix* silenced her in a few minutes ; the Captain, Officers and Men shewing the utmost order and good Discipline, and that when forced into action, they retained the skill and spirit for which the English Navy has at all times been admired. The French Frigate appearing very deep, I have directed one of the Frigates to keep Her Company until past Mangalore, after which she is at liberty to proceed wherever the Captain pleases.

I am, Sir, Your most obedt. Servt.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

The following is Sir Richard Strachan's report on the matter to his Commanding Officer :—

“ PHŒNIX,” TELlicherry ROAD,

SIR,—

21st Novr., 1791.

In consequence of the signal which you made for me to examine strange sails passing near the Fleet, I proceeded in pursuit of two Merchant Ships. About Noon a French Frigate, that was also standing to the Northward, made a Signal and shortened sail, and the two Merchant Ships closed to Her—a little after one P.M. we fired a Gun unshotted to leeward to denote that our Intentions were friendly, and to induce them to bring to. At this time the French Frigate had set all Her Sails except Her Royals, and the Merchant vessels sailed well, His Majesty's Ship the *Perseverance* and this ship not being able to gain upon each other, and very little on those we pursued. I soon after ordered another Gun, unshotted, to be fired to Leeward, and then the French Frigate made a signal, and brought to with the two Merchant Ships ahead of Her. Upon coming up with Him He appeared to be clear for Action. Their People were at their Guns, which they kept pointing at us. He hailed us and asked what I wanted. I informed Him that I had Orders to search the two vessels ahead of Him, but as our Nations were in perfect Friendship, we did not mean to use any violence, and

that I would send my Boat on board of Him to explain, in case the vessels should be under His charge. He answered He did not understand me, and began to make sail—this ship being between Him and the two Merchant Vessels. I however reflected upon the Consequence of harsh measures, and sent a Boat with the First Lieutenant to explain, if possible, to His satisfaction, that no National insult was intended. Upon the Boat getting alongside Him, and the Officer delivering the Message, He began to make sail, and made a signal which was instantly obeyed by the two Merchant Ships, they making sail. I was then ahead of Him. I saw that if they once had the start, we should not easily get up with them. I therefore made sail, the French Man of War pointing Her Guns at us—Our Boat was no a great way astern. I hailed the Frigate and told Him that if He did not stop the ships from making sail I should be obliged to fire at them. He told me in English “I do not understand you, Sir.” One of our People hailed Him in French, and endeavoured to persuade Him to stop the ships, and signal, that no accident might Happen from our firing at them, which we should be obliged to do if they did not stop. I therefore began to fire at one with our Bow chase, and the other with our Larboard Guns. They soon shortened sail but did not bring to. The Frigate fired some shot but not at us. The *Perseverance* at some distance from us boarded one, and we dropped our Boat on board the other. We backed close to Her to prevent the Frigate from injuring our Boat. She fired two shot across us, and soon after, having closed with us, began to engage with much vivacity from Her Broadside. I began to return it, our People having with great presence of Mind obeyed their Instructions in not firing ’til I ordered them. I luffed close to Her, she having more way, attempted to rake us across the Bow, which I prevented by keeping close to Her, and when Her Guns were all discharged, luffed across Her stern, swept Her Ensign from Her Mizzen Peck with our Jib Boom, and raked Her. Her pendant came down, but she still continued to attempt to cross us on the other Bow. We closed with Him on the Starboard side, and after a Broadside, which brought His sails down, they called out and made signs that they had surrendered.

The Rigging, Yard Tackles and Boats being much damaged, I would not board Her, and therefore made the signal that we would not. As the *Perseverance* was at some distance, and did not

seem to understand the Signal, and being anxious, I stood towards Her and gave the French Ship in charge to Captain Smith, with the accompanying instructions, which I hope you will approve of. She proved to be *La Resolue* of 36 Guns and 250 men, commanded by Monsieur De Callamand, Lieutenant de Vaisseau, who was wounded in the Action. I left Her at anchor between Mangalore and Dela, repairing Her damages and hope by Captain Smith's assistance she will be able to sail the 20th in the Morning, but I am informed she has suffered much. Having given Captain Smith His instructions, our first Lieutenant came on board, having as I said before been left astern. He informed me that the French Captain told Him that He would not allow the two Ships, which were under His Convoy to be searched, that He thought it a presumption on the part of the English to attempt to do it in the open seas, but that if we had blockaded any Port, and they were going there, He would have allowed me to search them, but that He would not then and ordered His Men to their Quarters, upon which our First Lieutenant (Parker) left the ship. At this time He made the Signal to His Convoy which I last alluded to.

You will excuse, Sir, my being so particular in the detail of this affair, but as it may be the subject of much National importance, I think it my Duty to give you the fullest information, and have brought for that purpose the second Captain of the French Frigate with His own consent, the Captain being wounded, to corroborate what I have asserted with respect to the motives for engaging us.

Enclosed is my Journal, a state of His Majesty's Ship with a return of the killed and wounded, and a report of the Officer of this Ship who boarded the two Merchant Vessels.

I have much pleasure, Sir, to add that His Majesty's Ship is in perfect readiness to perform any service you may please to order Her upon, the little accidents of the Service being repaired as well as we could do it.

I have the Honor to be, Sir, with the greatest respect,
Your most H: O: Serv.,

R. J. STRACHAN.

P.S.—I beg to add, Sir, that a note accompanies this Letter from the Captain of the French Frigate, upon my sending my First Lieutenant on board to Him, after He had surrendered.

He desired Him to tell me that he was ready to do anything I wished, with respects to the movements of the French Frigate. I then desired Him through His second Officer, who was on board with me, to assure me that He would follow us to Tellicherry, that this affair might be explained, the note does not appear to me to be perfectly satisfactory, and as His Ship was represented to be much shattered, I was induced to desire Captain Smith to assist Him, and escort Him to Tellicherry, but told Captain Smith He was not to be considered in the light of a Captured vessel, and to be permitted to wear His Colours, and this I also acquainted the French Captain with, and that the *Perseverance* would give Him every assistance.

As I have not mentioned the *Perseverance* in the Course of the Action, I think it my duty in justice to Captain Smith to inform you that when it began the *Perseverance* was at some distance near the ship. Her boat was on board, and we were so situated that the *Perseverance* could not fire conveniently, when she came towards us, without running the risk of doing us injury.

R. J. STRACHAN.

It can well be realized, blood having been shed, how strained relations became between the French and English in Eastern waters. A lengthy correspondence ensues between Cornwallis and the Commander of the *La Resolue*. Monsieur de St. Felix, the newly appointed Commodore of the French Fleet, arrived on the Coast early the following January. This officer, it will be seen, backed up his Junior to the utmost, as of course he had to, and nearly fought an action with Cornwallis himself. Indeed, he would have, if it had not been that the crews of his ships refused to work their guns in a cause which they considered to be unjust.

CHAPTER VIII

1791

ON November 24th, five days after the engagement referred to in the previous chapter, the Captain of the French Frigate *La Resolute*, which had engaged Sir Richard Strachan, writes to Cornwallis :—

ON BOARD THE FRIGATE “*LA RESOLUE*,” 24th Nov., 1791.

TO THE HONBLE. WILLIAM CORNWALLIS, . . .

SIR,—

The violence, exercised by the *Phoenix* and *Perserverance* under your orders towards particular vessels under the Escort of the Frigate of the French State, *La Resolute*, that I commanded, and against which the means of Force trusted to me have proved insufficient, can only be taken into consideration but by the Nation itself, against which it was directed. But having been vanquished by such Superior Force, I here declare, Sir, as I have already done several times to the Person charged with your orders, that I look upon myself as a Prisoner of war to Great Britain, also all the persons who compose the Crew of the Frigate of which you have taken possession, and have carried into one of your Ports, and that you have thought proper this day to abandon at Mahé, where we wait for your definite answer on our own case for which it becomes very pressing to provide.

I likewise declare to you that the Mission prescribed to me having miscarried in profound Peace, you have made Great Britain responsible to the French Nation for all losses that may happen to Commerce on this Coast, also for the scarcity to which the Colony of Mahé is reduced, for whose supply it was the object of the expedition I was protecting.

It would be unnecessary to draw up here, Sir, what was done and what passed during the Day, of which you ordered the

Disposition, if I did not think it necessary to let you know myself the account I send to the King. [The irony of it! “I send to the King!” Poor unfortunate Louis XVI, who was at the time a prisoner in his own capital.]

The Frigates, the *Phoenix* and *Perseverance*, under your command gone [went?] from Tellicherry the 19th of this month at the same time that the Frigate *La Resolue* and her convoy were leaving Mahé. I was chased and joined by them, having waited for them, on the security that the certainty of peace between the two Nations gave me. They have attempted to visit the Convoy which I opposed, as it was my duty to [oppose?—word missing] an attempt so illegal to the rights of the People, and so injurious to the honor of the Flag. The Commander of the *Phoenix* sent me an Officer that told me that his Captain had orders from you to visit the French Convoy. I replied to him that the vessels were under the Convoy of the Frigate of the State, and that I should employ all the means which were in my power to prevent it. I was nevertheless very willing to make known the operations of the Commerce of these vessels upon the Coast. I moreover said that France was not ignorant of the war between Great Britain and Tippoo Sultaun, and you cannot be ignorant yourself, Sir, that in that case you can only visit neutral vessels that would introduce themselves into the Enemy’s plans, and that you kept blocked up.

We were then at sea steering the course of all Vessels going up the Coast to the Northward. I observed this point to the Officer of the *Phoenix*. The Frigates under your Orders would, in spite of that, visit the Convoy. They used violence by firing a shot at the vessels, the Captain of one of which was grievously wounded. They sent their boats on board.

I believe, Sir, that all these motives were sufficient to determine me to repel with all my Force,—and although the profound Peace reigning between the two Powers—an hostility thus declared.

I have the Honour to be, Sir,

Your most Humble and very Obedient Servant,

CALLAMAND.

However much the French Commander may have sulked, one cannot but admire his pluck, and one is struck by the excellence of his English, considering the period in which it was written.

Cornwallis's answer is as follows :—

“MINERVA,” TELLICHERRY ROAD, 25th Nov., 1791.

TO MONSIEUR CALLAMAND OF THE FRENCH FRIGATE “RESOLUE.”

SIR,—

It would take me some time to answer your letter, and make the necessary further enquiries of Sir Richard Strachan, the Captain of the *Phoenix*, but as I understand from the Officer you have been pleased to send, that you keep your sick or wounded men on board ; for the sake of Humanity I request of you that you will not carry on the Farce of considering your Ship a Prize any longer, but that you will take care of those men yourself, whose misfortune has been occasioned by your firing into, and beginning to engage in the time of profound peace, an English Man-of-War. The persons sent on board from the *Perseverance* were sent to assist, you having reported that you wanted Assistance. No one would have thought of taking possession of your ship as a Prize. You are pleased (refusing all explanation) to engage an English Frigate, it was necessary for that Ship to silence you. Having so done, if you had not asked for assistance nothing further would have passed at the time, the two Nations being at peace with each other. And although I should admire the spirit you shewed, if it had been in a better cause, I cannot but lament the loss of lives it has occasioned. And I do request that you will no longer abandon the care of those unhappy men upon a Plea, which I understand from the English Officers, you have only taken up of late, but that at first you were willing to proceed on your voyage.

I wish that you may soon recover from your wounds, and I am, Sir, with great truth, your most obedient, humble Servant,

W. CORNWALLIS.

The following day, presumably after having had a further interview with Sir R. Strachan, Cornwallis writes a second letter to Callamand. As a great part of this again recounts what happened, extracts only are given. He starts by stating that the Frenchman's account does not agree with that of Sir Richard. He directly accuses Callamand of having come from Mahé for the express purpose of attacking the *Phoenix*, whom he expected to be unprepared, and on that point says :—

“It is very rare that a ship in profound peace is so ready to resist so sudden and unexpected an attack ; the situation of the *Phoenix* as a Man of War was very much to the credit of Sir Richard Strachan, her Commander ; for I believe such an attempt never happened before.”

As Callamand still insisted upon being considered a Prisoner of War and his ship a Prize, Cornwallis says :—

“Whether you hoist your Colours or no seems to be of little consequence. The first part of the transaction is much the most important, and what must be adjusted by those of our Nations at Home, and I should be very sorry that any thing should pass between us, but what is perfectly civil and polite.

“You observe that you are not ignorant that my Nation is at war with Tippoo Sultaun, it is also probable that you might have heard before you left France that several ships were fitting out with Warlike stores in the different Parts of that Nation, supposed to be for the use of Tippoo Sultaun, and that Remonstrances had passed upon the subject from our Court. You will therefore believe that it was not unlikely that I should receive instructions upon that Head. But my own desire has been to act with the utmost moderation, and indeed Sir Richard Strachan has been under the apprehension, that from acting by my Directions, he should bring Himself under Contempt for his Humility.”

With reference to the unfortunate wounding of one of the Masters of the French Merchant vessels, Cornwallis says :—

“That you could not have known until all was over, and it was also occasioned by his not being suffered to stop. When a firing has commenced it is not easy to say what mischief may ensue. I therefore admire Sir Richard Strachan for having used every means to prevent it.”

He concludes by saying :—

“I will now only repeat the Interest I feel in your welfare. I have no doubt that in war you will prove yourself an able and brave Commander ; but I should have thought myself fortunate in time of Peace to have met with an Officer of more moderation. I apprehend the Commerce of the French Nation is not interrupted upon this Coast, except they have a desire to trade with Tippoo Sultaun in supplying him with Warlike Stores, and that it will not be in my Power to suffer. As this must be settled by

higher Powers, it is useless for us to write any more upon the subject."

Lieutenant Parker's report of what happened when he boarded the French Frigate bears out exactly what was reported by Sir Richard Strachan, but he states rather more clearly that the Commander of the French Frigate only admitted the British right to search ships going to a blockaded port. The latter denied that the vessels he was convoying had any intention of doing this; but that they were empty and were going to Mangalore to load rice for Mahé. If this was the case, why was it thought necessary to convoy them? Lieutenant Parker emphasizes the fact that the *Phoenix* did not return the French Frigate's fire immediately, which caused him "much surprise." He also stated how he found the French Commander, his officers and crew armed to the teeth.

On December 26, 1791, Cornwallis again writes to the Admiralty with reference to this affair:—

SIR,—

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty will see by the enclosed papers, which I transmit to you to be laid before them, what had passed in regard to the *Resolue*, French Frigate. If the Captain of that ship would have waited to have let Lieutenant Parker return to the *Phoenix*, it is probable the disagreeable circumstances which followed would have been prevented, but Sir Richard Strachan could not possibly know what passed between the French Captain and Lieutenant Parker, and the Frigate made sail before he could get into his Boat, which obliged Sir Richard Strachan to do the same, and Lieutenant Parker was left far astern. From the French Frigate's being ready for action, the Captain and Officers armed upon Deck and the Guns kept constantly pointing at the *Phoenix*, it is pretty evident they were determined to bring her to action, and indeed I have little doubt but that she came from Mahé for the purpose. Monsieur St. Felix, who lately came out in the *Cybèle*, and who commands the French Ships in this Country, is expected with two Frigates from the Mauritius.

I await impatiently his arrival, and shall endeavour to be upon an amiable footing with him.

Those on board the *Resolue* have shipped her Mizen mast

and appear to take care of the Ship, but their Colours are not hoisted.

I hope that the French Commodore will prove a reasonable man, and no further disputes will happen, which has always been and will be very much my desire to prevent, and I am much inclined to believe if there had been a regular Government established in France, that nothing of this kind would have happened.

Sir Richard Strachan I am sure is desirous of doing everything that is proper, and his having been so ready to send his Lieutenant on board the *Resolue* for the purpose of explaining, would I should hope sufficiently prove his strong desire to prevent Hostilities. It was very distressing for him to have two Lieutenants away in Boats at the time he was suddenly attacked, whilst it adds not a little to his credit, as an Active Officer, to be able so circumstanced to silence the French Frigate in so short a time. Lieutenant Finley of Marines on board the *Phoenix* was much wounded and is since dead. I do not hear that any Officer was wounded on board the French Frigate except the Captain. I understand he has sent his second, Captain Home [presumably second in command?].

The letter proceeds to state that Cornwallis had taken steps to send Lieutenant Parker home, in order that he, too, might be able personally to tell the story, "And more particularly the Hostile State he found the French Frigate in, when sent on board by his Captain."

De Felix arrived with his Squadron off the Coast on January 4, 1792, and chanced to fall in with Cornwallis, who was cruising in the *Minerva* off Tellicherry. The latter fired a gun to show the *Cybèle*, the French flag-ship, that he wished to speak with her. That this was resented by the French Commodore the following correspondence shows. The first two letters are written on the same day and crossed:—

"MINERVA," TELlicherry ROAD,
5th Jany., 1792.

À MONSIEUR MONSIEUR ST FELIX, COMMANDING THE DIVISION OF
FRENCH SHIPS IN INDIA.

SIR,—

I congratulate you upon Your Arrival on this Coast. I am sorry to complain of the Conduct of the *Resolue*. On the

19th of November last, observing some strange sails passing Tellicherry at break of Day, I ordered the *Phœnix* and *Perseverance* to examine them. The *Phœnix* fired to bring them to, when the *Resolue* coming from Mahé Road fired two Broadsides into and continued engaging the *Phœnix*, what happened in consequence will of Course have been related to you, several Men have been lost on both sides.

I have observed both in the last and the Former War that the Nation at War always examined all ships that they met at Sea, which seems to me but reasonable, and I was the more surprised when my Officer informed me last night, that you were displeased at my firing to speak you. I could not then tell that it was a Man of War, and therefore it was of Course my duty to be informed what Ship it was, and particularly as We have information of Supplies coming from Europe to assist our Enemy, Tippoo Sultaun.

I hope, Sir, that you will be pleased to consider of these Matters, and that as our Nations are at Peace at Home, that We may not without just Cause (which will never be given on my part) enter upon Hostilities in this part of the World—which has occasioned the loss of Men to no purpose whatever. I desire again to declare my Inclinations to be upon the best terms with you and your Nation, and to assure you that I have the Honour to be with much esteem Your most Obedt. Humble Servt.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

At the same time the French Commodore wrote to Cornwallis :—

ON BOARD “CYBÈLE” OFF MAHÉ ROAD THE 5th Jany., 1792.

HONBLE COMMODORE CORNWALLIS, ETC. ETC.

TELLICHERRY ROAD.

SIR,—

It is with the greatest Surprise that arriving off this Road, I there find a French Frigate, that Superior Force of your Nation has compelled to strike Her Flag. She has yielded to force, and it is by Force that I take possession of Her—the Gun that I just fired on Her having no other object.

Whatever might have been the cause of that Event, which I so little suspected, the Account having been given to our respec-

tive Courts, it will not be followed up between us, until They have pronounced, if hereafter the French Flag is to be respected in those Seas. But I am forced, Sir, to warn you that all infractions of Treaties, whether in ill-treating our Merchant Vessels, or in pretending to visit them when they will be under the escort of Ships of my Division, can only be looked upon by me but as a declaration of War, and that I will repulse Your Hostilities with all my Power, and in a manner—worthy of the French Nation.

I am perfectly, Sir, Your very Humble and very Obt. Servt.,
DE ST. FELIX.

This brings the following reply from Cornwallis :—

“I had written to you upon the subject of the Dispute with the *Resolute*, just before you were pleased to send an Officer to me last night with your Letter. The *Resolute* having commenced an Action with His Britannic Majesty's Ship *Phoenix*, it became necessary for that Ship to endeavour to silence Her, which having been done : when the Circumstance was related to me, I acquainted Monsieur Callamand, Her Commander, that I did not consider the *Resolute* in the light of a Prize, and that He was at liberty to Hoist His Colours and proceed where He pleased. It is therefore a matter of perfect Indifference to me in what manner the French Colours were afterwards hoisted on board that Ship.

“I am a good deal concerned at the manner in which you have been pleased to express yourself, no French Merchant Ship has been illtreated by any Ship of my Squadron that I have been informed of. I believe it has never been the practice between civilized nations to fire a shot into a Ship, even suppose a difference of opinion should arise. The Officer I sent on board your Ship the night before last informed me, that if I fired again to speak with you, it was your intention to fire a broadside into the *Minerva*, this appears to me shocking to Humanity, and as at this time you had not been informed of what had happened in regard to the *Resolute*, it would seem that your Ships had come upon this Coast ready to seize (or rather to form) a Pretence to quarrel with the English—I hope not with a view to shew a good disposition to Tippoo Sulatun. My pacific disposition has I should hope been sufficiently manifested by my having considerably reduced my Squadron, even since the Hostile attack of the

Resolue. I have in my former Letter taken the Liberty of stating my Opinion upon the Subject of visiting Ships under neutral Colours. You are pleased to warn me, but I am not to be deterred from doing my Duty. I have a very high Opinion of the Honour and spirit of the French Officers. You will however I apprehend have the Justice to allow that it has not been the Practice of those of England to come forward *only* when they possess a Superior Force."

The concluding sentence of this letter was a Parthian shot, and must have somewhat annoyed the Frenchman, who answered the following day :—

ON BOARD THE "CYBÉLE" IN MAHÉ ROAD, 7th Jany., 1792.

HONBLE COMMODORE CORNWALLIS, ETC. ETC.

"MINERVA," TELLICHERRY ROAD.

SIR,—

The insufficiency without doubt of the translator of your last Letter (for I don't understand English myself) having made me find some ambiguity, it is impossible for me to answer in so precise a manner as I could have wished. I shall therefore have the Honor to observe to you, Sir, that it was not to the *Phœnix* alone, as you seem to believe in the two letters you have done me the Honour to write, that *La Resolue* had to do with on the 19th day of November last. It is after having fought the *Phœnix* and *Perseverance* re-united, who had before fired several shots at the Vessels she escorted, that Monsieur Callamand saw Himself constrained to strike His Flag, the violence done to the Vessels of Her Convoy ought incontestably to be repulsed by Him. He has done it and I approve of His Conduct. But, Sir, the Aggression of the Frigates under your Orders towards French Vessels, and the consequence that followed having been put under the Eyes of our respective Courts, to whom it belongs to take it into consideration, I am here going to declare to you the Intentions with which I am arrived in these Seas ; the Protection of Commerce of the French Nation, and the respect due to Her Flag are the sole motives by which I am guided ; Totally a stranger to your war with Tippoo Sultan, I have only brought Here, and still preserve the same pacific views towards those of your Nation. But it becomes indispensable for me to know more positively, than express the two Letters, with which you

have honoured me, if you mean against my expectation to the Contempt of the usage of all the maritime Powers, and against the Treaties of Peace that exist between France and England, to search the French Vessels that will be under the Escort of those of my Division.

I don't dissemble to you, Sir, that your negative answer on that subject would be much more agreeable to me, as it alone can, (as I so ardently desire to preserve between us in this part of the World) the good intelligence that unites our two Nations in Europe.

I have the Honour to be, Sir, Your very Hble. Servt.,

DE ST. FELIX.

Cornwallis's answer to this leaves no doubt as to his intentions. He wrote :—

“As you seem by your Letter, which I had the Honour of receiving this morning, to desire a more direct answer to the Question immediately between us, I take the Liberty of acquainting you that, having received directions to prevent supplies from being sent to our Enemy, Tippoo Sultaun, It is impossible for me to perform that duty, without our satisfying ourselves as to the lading of such vessels as come upon this Coast, which it has always been the Intention of the English Officers to do with the utmost Civility.

“If it is your Determination to prevent me from performing this necessary part of my Duty to my Country, which I fear to be the Case, from your having been pleased to mention to my Officer the other night, the firing a Broadside into the *Minerva*, and from my having observed that you unmoored this morning upon my firing to stop and examine a Ship passing.

I am forced to warn you of the consequence of such proceeding, and that you will have to answer for every drop of blood spilt upon such an unprovoked Occasion.

I send an Officer who has taken a translation of this Letter to prevent the inconvenience you mention.

And I have the Honour to be, Sir,

Your most Obt. Serv.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

St. Felix replies apparently accepting the challenge :—

“Although the Letter which you have just sent me,” he

wrote, "is not an answer so positive as I had a right to expect, it appears to me that against all the Observations that I have had the Honour to make you, in spite of all the Events that will be the result, you are determined upon the Course of your Hostilities, in visiting by arm'd Force the Vessels of my Nation that will find themselves under the Flag of the Frigates of my division.

"I again repeat to you, Sir, that strange act is for me a declaration of War, to which you are apparently authorised by your Court, and that you judge cannot commence in a more favorable circumstance, seeing the actual inferiority of my Forces.

"But, Sir, how is it possible that you can permit yourself to make me responsible for the Blood that will be spilled on the Occasion, without provocation you say, whilst you alone will be the cause by the violation in plain peace to all the Treaties, to all the Customs, and to all regards due to the Flags of Sovereigns.

"I dare still beg of you, Sir, to reflect on the nature of your Pretensions, and to the dreadful consequence that will be the result, please still to take it into mature consideration, and what is permitted to you by the rights of civilised Nations, and what I owe to myself, and to the Honor of the Flag that I am charged to make respected.

"If in this important circumstance I am not happy enough to see you change your intentions, this Letter will be the last that I shall have the Honor to write you."

Cornwallis takes no notice of this, as January 10th he gives specific instructions to Captain Smith of the *Perseverance* to continue the stopping and searching of vessels of the French, or of any neutral nation, whether they are convoyed by Men-of-War or not. He proceeded northward to Bombay himself, as the *Minerva's* mainmast had been shivered by lightning and she required a new one.

Cornwallis, before the arrival of Monsieur de St. Felix, had sent an account of what had happened between the *Resolue* and the *Phenix* to the Governor-General. It was natural that the latter was much perturbed. Tippoo's resistance was not yet overcome, and the last thing he wanted was that France should seek to find justification for a declaration of war from something

which had happened in the East. He writes to the Commodore from Camp at Magri :—

“It was with great concern that I heard of the affair between the *Phoenix* and the *Resolute*, for although the behaviour of the French Captain appears to have been so violent and unjustifiable that it is hardly possible he should meet with support anywhere, yet, by misrepresentation and falsehood, it may make a great noise in Europe, and occasion much trouble.”

He goes on to suggest :—

“As every one of our Governments in this country may for its own security think itself interested by the commission of an act of hostility on the part of France, it might be proper that you should transmit a statement of the facts in a circular letter to the Presidencies of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay,” and concludes by saying : “It will give me great satisfaction on every account to learn that you have found the French Commodore more reasonable and righterheaded than the Captain.”

Having made his protest, St. Felix climbed down, and Cornwallis was able to inform his brother of the fact, which must have been a great relief to his mind. The letter gives an account of the French Commodore’s first bombastic threats and concludes by saying :—

“I have however the pleasure to say he has not been able to put these violent measures into execution, His men having (as I am informed) refused to stand by him in so unjust a cause. And his conduct when I was at Sea with him the other day being very pacific seems to confirm it.”

It can be imagined at this period of the French Revolution that discipline on board French Men-of-War was bad, and very different from what it became during the Napoleonic era.

CHAPTER IX

1791-1792

WE must now return to the war with Tippoo, about to enter upon its final stages.

In July of this year the Rev. C. Wells wrote to Cornwallis from the Camp near Bangalore, where the army had been resting during the rainy season. Yet another task is given to Mr. Wells—he has been made Field Post-Master. He says :—

“The Army will move on in two or three days to attack the Fort of Ossore. It is conveniently situated to form a strong post to facilitate the communication with the Carnatic while we are drawing our supplies from thence. Lord Cornwallis has just appointed me ‘to conduct the business of Post Office despatches,’ &c. . . . I am to enter upon it to-morrow, and I trust the business will be executed more to his Lordship’s satisfaction than heretofore.”

Poor man, it was the last letter the Commodore received from him, as he died the following December.

Writing to his brother in August, Earl Cornwallis said :

“We have met with no disturbance of late from the enemy, and are very conveniently situated for receiving the various supplies, of which this army is in great want, from the Carnatic ; but the extraordinary dryness of the season distresses us very much in the very important article of forage.”

In another letter dated September 10th from the same camp he indicates that he is preparing to renew operations against the enemy. He says :—

“I am busily preparing to look again towards Seringapatam, but I hope Tippoo will be sufficiently sensible of the desperate state of his affairs, to offer such terms as we may with safety and honour accept before the time arrives for our commencing our march.”

His hopes were not fulfilled, as Tippoo was determined to fight it out to the bitter end.

In the last paragraph of this letter he says :—

“I am glad you approve of Sir Richard Strachan ; from what I saw of him I thought you would do so.”

Strachan became one of Cornwallis's closest friends, and served under him when he commanded the Channel Fleet in 1804-5. It was Strachan who defeated Dumanoir, who, with the remains of Villeneuve's fleet, had escaped after Trafalgar.

The following November, Earl Cornwallis again wrote to his brother, he was still encamped in the same place, as owing to various difficulties and preliminary undertakings an advance was not yet possible :—

“Nothing can exceed my anxiety to put an end to this detestable war, but it is no easy task to provide for the subsistence of numerous armies when they are to penetrate far into a desert country, and when the communication with the distant quarter from which their supplies must be brought is liable to constant interruption of an active, vigilant, and capable enemy. I have already with great labour and exertion reduced some strong hill forts with a view to the security of our convoys, and I must attempt some more of this work before I can in prudence advance to the enemy's capital.

“The violence of the Carnatic monsoon, which I find, contrary to all the information I had received, prevails entirely in this country, has considerably retarded the progress of my heavy guns, but the last division is now near Bangalore, and everything is getting right again.”

The last day of the year he wrote again, this time from Magri. The last stage of the campaign had started in earnest. He says :—

“We have been so fortunate as to take in a very few days, and with hardly any loss, the important and hitherto reputed impregnable fortress of Sewendroog. This place and some neighbouring forts, which, though strong, made but little resistance after the fall of Sewendroog, will tend in a very great degree to insure our communication with Bangalore whilst we are engaged in the attack of Seringapatam.

“The last of our stores from the Carnatic with the detachment of the Royal Artillery, whose progress has been long delayed by the extraordinary rains that have fallen this year, are

now in the neighbourhood of Bangalore, and I hope very soon to advance towards the enemy's capital. I received a letter from Abercromby, dated the 16th of this month, at the top of the pass.

"I am sorry to tell you that we have lost poor Dr. Wells, who was much esteemed in this army, and is universally regretted. No man could have been more resigned to his fate. I saw a letter from him to Ross after the doctors had given him over, in which you would have supposed he was describing the situation of some other person."

Poor Dr. Wells! He must have been a most estimable man, ready to tackle any job he was given and carry it out to the best of his ability.

The campaign against Tippoo was rapidly drawing to its victorious conclusion. On February 10th Earl Cornwallis wrote describing the night attack on Tippoo's camp—"which was so strong that it would have cost a great many lives if the attempt had been made by day, and as it had the additional defence of the cannon of fort and island, the event might even have been doubtful.

"Two of my columns succeeded most completely; some untoward circumstances impeded that which Medows commanded, which saved a part of his army, and of his field artillery. I have however possession of the north side of the river and of the greatest part of the island, and I have ruined at least half his infantry, and taken above sixty pieces of cannon.

"We are now preparing vigorously for the siege of the fort, and I trust there can be little doubt of our success, unless Tippoo should consent to such concessions as the Allies think they have a right to require."

The attack on the inner defences of Seringapatam succeeded, in spite of Tippoo's desperate resistance and personal bravery. On February 25th Earl Cornwallis informs his brother of the success which had attended the operation, and that preliminary articles of peace had been signed with the man whom Abercromby had described as "a cruel tyrant and usurper," which indeed he was, although an extremely brave and fine leader. In a further letter dated the 21st of the following month from the same source, it is interesting to note that the Home Government were getting tired of this war. It says:—

“1792, *March 21.* CAMP, SERINGAPATAM.

I received only two days ago your letter of the 16th of February, which was a long time on its journey. All is now concluded, the definitive treaty signed (of which I send you official information), and I hope to march on the 26th or 27th from this dreary desert.

The *Swan* Sloop of war arrived a few days ago from England, which she left on the 27th of September, recommending to us to make peace on reasonable terms, notwithstanding our success at Bangalore. All peace in Europe and the 3 per cents. above 89. We have anticipated their wishes about peace.

There are several other letters from Earl Cornwallis to his brother written at this time describing the means he took to get his army back to the coast and the many difficulties he had to contend with, also lamenting the number of the sick and wounded for whom transport through the Ghauts proved a difficult task. He also talks about his being relieved and whether it will be possible for both brothers to go home together in a man-of-war. As, however, war with France broke out the following year, both were obliged to stay on.

Cornwallis received several interesting letters from home towards the end of this year, one or two of which give the impressions which the French Revolution had made on the minds of the writers. Hood wrote of “the strange things that have happened and are happening every day,” and that “The condition of France is deplorable in the extreme, and it appears to me that the nation is at the eve of its troubles only. God grant that this country may not be involved.”

The Bishop of Lichfield also wrote congratulating him that “his business with the French ship went off very well indeed.” This, of course, refers to the action between the *Phoenix* and *Resolute*. The French, after hearing both sides of the case, seem to have acted with fairness in the matter, as the letter goes on to say: “The behaviour of France stopped all mouths, and put an end to the whole affair.” Possibly the French were too much occupied with their troubles at home to bother about an “unfortunate incident” in the East.

The Bishop, after mentioning Eye, goes on to suggest the coming of the first Reform Bill, for he says:—

“However there is a society established (in which are considerable names and persons of great property, and many members of the House of Commons) for reforming Parliament. The plan is to get petitions, as has been done in the slave business, from all quarters against next year.”

Cornwallis also heard from Lieutenant Gore, who had been with him in the Squadron in India, but who had been invalided home. This officer writes in a most friendly spirit, and talks of his regret of having been “obliged to quit the situation so truly enviable under your command.” He goes on to say how Cornwallis’s old friend, Admiral Leveson-Gower, had died suddenly, and also tells something of politics and naval matters:—

“Mr. Pitt is appointed Warden and Admiral of the Cinque Ports, with a salary of £4,000 a year, in the room of Lord Guilford, who died ten days ago, and the Dukes of Portland and Beaufort are contesting for the Chancellorship of Oxford. The former, it is supposed, will carry it, being supported by the Ministry; and it is likewise much talked of that a coalition will shortly take place, and a very strong one. If so, the great people in newspapers say a war is certainly to follow, but none mention with whom. An armament, I have heard in this House, is certainly to be ordered in the spring to bring the old Empress to her senses, who is at present persecuting the poor unfortunate Poles in an inhuman manner.

“Lord Hood is at present at sea. . . . [His ships] are to be reviewed by his Majesty off Weymouth on the 23rd, after which they are to come into port. The *Centurian* is fitting at Chatham for the Jamaica station, and Admiral Leveson told me a few days ago that Lord Hood is going there as Governor and Commander-in-Chief. He now has the command at Portsmouth, and Captain Inglefield is at Jamaica. The *Colossus*, built exactly after the *Canada*, is the crack ship of Lord Hood’s fleet, and sails round them all. We have had a fine camp in this neighbourhood lately, which I much fear assisted the untimely end of Admiral Leveson, for on the day of review he went there on horseback at 6 a.m., and did not return home till half-past three, all which time he did not once dismount. . . . The camp was certainly a very fine sight, and amused his Majesty much.”

He concludes his letter with news of the French Revolution:

“The state of France is dreadful beyond conception. On

Saturday last the decree passed the National Assembly for deposing the King. The mob instantly rose, attacked and demolished the Tuilleries, and all the Swiss Guards who defended the Palais Royal except a hundred were murdered, and other people in Paris who were supposed to be of the King's party, to the number, it is said, of 10,000. The King, Queen, and Royal family escaped to the Assembly and were there protected. They have been removed to another house under a strong guard, where they are to remain till a decree is passed for their execution, which from all accounts seems inevitable. A degree of infatuation has seized upon France, and the people seem hurrying themselves headlong to destruction. Those who have escaped the disorder are come over here, and it is incredible the vast numbers of them there are in this island. The Prussian and Austrian armies have crossed the Rhine, and will be at Paris in about a week; what is then to be done I know not. They are immensely strong, and it is supposed will carry all before them. The French armies consist of rabble and boys, and are altogether unable to stand against veteran and disciplined troops. This I have from a friend who is in France purposely to look on and see the fun." . . .

The last sentence suggests how little was really known of the true state of affairs in France at that time.

Cornwallis also heard from Sir Richard King, thanking him for his kindness to his son, and giving him an account of the assassination of Gustavus III of Sweden :—

"Information is just now arrived that the King of Sweden had the contents of a pistol fired into him at a masquerade by a discontented officer. It is said a ball has been extracted, but it is understood the pistol was loaded with nails and slugs besides, and the King's life is in great danger; indeed the general opinion is that he is not alive now. Report says he was quite collected, and would not suffer the wound to be much attended to until he had settled the Regency on his brother. I do not like these attacks upon Monarchy, being convinced that such as ours is the best government.

"All those whose opinion is worth regarding disapprove of the conduct of the French Captain in the affair with Sir Richard Strachan, and perhaps a check to the constant insolence of that nation could not have happened at a better period."

Lord Townsend [Cornwallis's first cousin], whose son had also joined the Navy and was stationed in the East, wrote thanking the Commodore for his kindness to the young man, and wisely said :—

“We are likewise happy that he remains in his present situation, improving his profession, instead of incurring by his return the risk of a ballot into some societies here of fashionable dissipation.”

CHAPTER X

1792

It has already been pointed out how important it was felt by both the Home and Indian Governments that the coasts, islands, etc., in and south of the bay of Bengal should be properly surveyed. These surveys were often the direct means of planting the British flag in out of the way places, and it can be said they were in many instances the foundations of what are now valuable and prosperous Colonies. This idea was probably in the minds of those who ordered them to be carried out, and that surveys however useful were but a means to an end.

Cornwallis enjoyed nothing more than cruising along the coasts of Siam and Malaya and, as he explained to Nelson, doing a certain amount of exploring. For this purpose he had received permission from the East India Company to purchase on their behalf the *Despatch* schooner, which he armed, and gave the command of her to his friend Whitby. She was of comparatively shallow draught and was therefore able to go into places where a large ship like the *Crown* could not. Prior to his arrival in the East, Lieutenant Blair had already been commissioned by the Indian Government, whose servant he was, to carry out a survey of the coasts of the Andaman Islands. A copy of his orders, and his very excellent and lucid report, were sent to Cornwallis. Certain extracts from both are worth recording. The orders are taken first.

After certain general instructions as to stores, route, and the strict observance of a friendly attitude towards the natives, unless attacked by them, Lieutenant Blair is told :—

“ You will be charged with a few presents for the King of Tavai, who is understood to pretend to Sovereignty over the great Andaman, and the adjacent Islands, and you will transmit them when you judge proper, with a Civil Message that the occasion may seem to recommend.”

One is inclined to wonder how long the “pretence” of sovereignty by the King of Tavai had existed?

Here is another extract :—

“We do not suppose that you will find Port Cornwallis [the principal harbour in the Andamans] occupied by any other Power. But, if this should be the case, you will claim prior Possession, which you have taken, declaring it in formal but civil terms, but not using force without our orders or the Commodore of the Squadron, [Blair had been informed that Commodore Cornwallis was daily expected to arrive in the East] although the strength you might have to contend with should be inferior to your own.”

Lieutenant Blair’s report is most interesting; he was a thoroughly conscientious and highly efficient officer; much of it is purely technical, and deals with the actual charting of little-known waters, but he had quite a number of adventures, and says many poignant things, the result of intelligent observation. The following are some extracts :—

“We suffered many unprovoked insults here [one of the Andaman group of Islands] from the Natives, and were frequently obliged to quit the shore to avoid conflict with them; but my peaceful intention would not avail. While watering the Party was suddenly attacked, and a ‘Nagu’ was wounded in the neck with an arrow. The Party was obliged to defend themselves with Musquetry and wounded one of the savages. This little skirmish had one good effect; for the two succeeding days the water of both Vessels was filled up without interruption.

“Examining round Pilivie Island I met two Canoes, and gave the People which were in them some Bottles with which they were highly pleased, or seemed to be so, but to my astonishment one of them suddenly jumped out of his Canoe, run within twenty yards of the Boat, and shot all his arrows at us, which luckily did no hurt, though most struck the Boat. To punish the treacherous villain, I took and carried his canoe on board, and set her on fire next morning, with a Wind which would drive her to the Place where we had been insulted. These instances will serve to convey some Idea of the rude state and ferocious disposition of the Natives.”

Speaking generally of the largest of the Andaman Islands, Blair says :—

“Considering its nearness to the Equator, it may certainly be deemed a cool, healthy climate.”

Of the inhabitants, he says :—

“The natives from their features and colour of hair appear to be descended from Africans, and there is an account in the Annals of Goa which adds probability to this conjecture. Two Portuguese ships with African slaves bound to Malacca were lost on their passage thither, which may have first peopled the Great Andaman by being wrecked on that Island.

“They are probably in the rudest state of any rational Animals which are to be found. Both sexes go perfectly naked, have no other houses but shades about four feet high, and seem to depend principally on shell fish for their subsistence, which they gather on the Reefs at low water. Their greatest stretch of ingenuity appears in the Construction of their Bows, Arrows, Fishgigs, nets and canoes, and considering that their Tools are only Shells they are tolerably finished. The only appearance of civilization was their being formed into Tribes, and some attention which they paid their chiefs, which were generally painted red.”

Here is a further adventure :—

“We saw several women fishing on the Reefs, passing one of the points pretty close, a single man run down and shot his arrow at us, and as I perceived he had but few, I let him expend them all without interruption, only one of his stock struck the Boat; he was then joined by an old woman, a young woman and a boy, when they attacked us with stones. The women as the men were perfectly naked except a string round their waists, from which was a small ornamental Tassel hanging. The old woman when she could not make her stones reach the Boat expressed her fury. [Here follows an account which is unprintable, but it may be said that the old lady’s behaviour was highly improper.] As there was no danger to apprehend from their attack, and wishing to learn something characteristic of them, I threw a Knife on shore and made signs to the man to pick it up to see what effect it would produce. On taking up the Knife he immediately proclaimed peace by throwing down his stones. The women followed his Example and advanced to the Boat with as much confidence as if they had done nothing to offend us.”

Here is an account of a Volcano :—

“Having executed your Lordship’s [Earl Cornwallis’s] instructions I left that Coast March ye 21st and landed on Barren Island ye 24th. The Volcano was in a violent state of Eruption, and bursting out immense volumes of Smoke, and frequently showers of red-hot stones, some were of a size to weigh three or four tons, and had been thrown some hundred of Yards past the Foot of the Cone. There were two or three eruptions while we were close to it. Several of the red-hot stones rolled down the sides of the Cone, and they bounded a considerable way past Us.”

After surveying many Islands and uncharted reefs, Blair proceeded to survey Prince of Wales Island. From this place he proceeded to Acheen, or Achin as it is now called, situated at the extreme north-west of the Island of Sumatra. This is what he said about that part of the world :—

“I quitted Prince of Wales Island April 22nd and arrived at Acheen the 1st of May. No Country in the world perhaps affords a more beautiful and fertile prospect than the Coast of Pedier and neighbourhood of Acheen. There are very rich and extensive plains, and the Hills, though very steep, are partially cultivated to the Tops, affording excellent Crops of Rice, Sugar Canes, and Yams. Besides these the Country produces a great quantity of Peper, and an astonishing variety of excellent Fruit. Bullocks, goats and Poultry are good, and to be had in Abundance. Few places will be found to excell Acheen for the Refreshment of a Squadron.

“The Country is extremely populous, and a considerable part of it is in a state of Rebellion. Last year the King was shut up in his Fort for five months, and owed his safety to the Fidelity and gallant Behaviour of Mr. Huaw, who commands his vessels. He forced several of the Enemy’s ports on the Banks of the River, and opened a Communication between the Road and the Fort, which soon obliged the Rebels to retire. He, I believe, is the only instance of a European possessing the entire Confidence and managing all the business of a Malay Prince. I was assured by that Gentleman that it was a most favourable Crisis to make an Alliance, or obtain a Possession from the King of Acheen, for he sees that it would add to his strength and Security against his rebellious subjects.”

Lieutenant Blair's suggestion was not apparently followed up, or at any rate not till many years after, for Sir Frank Swettenham, in his delightful volume *British Malaya*, tells us that in 1819 Sir Stamford Raffles received "Instructions from the Supreme Government" to the effect "that he was to negotiate for a firm position at Achin, Sumatra, and endeavour to establish a station beyond Malacca." That European affairs a generation before this should have caused all thoughts of Empire expansion to be dismissed from the minds of both Home and Indian Governments is of small wonder. From his name Mr. Huaw may have been a Dutchman; one wonders, therefore, why he was so anxious for British interference in Sumatra, where the Dutch, even at that time, had already considerable interests.

Cornwallis visited Prince of Wales Island, or Pooloo Pinang, as it was called by the Malays, on several occasions.

This island was annexed to the British Empire for use of the East India Company in 1786 by one Francis Light, who had been one of those individuals commissioned by the Company to "look out for a suitable spot on which to found a station, the first object aimed at being a good anchorage and place of victualling, watering and refitting for their vessels engaged on the China trade." [Sir Frank Swettenham, *British Malaya*, p. 34.]

The island formed part of the dominions of the King or Sultan of Kedah, whose main possessions were directly east of it, on the mainland of the Malay Peninsula. It would appear that Mr. Light, in persuading the King to relinquish this part of his territory, pointed out the advantages to be gained by having, at any rate, the moral protection of the British against his enemies, who were numerous, the Siamese in particular. The King, however, was not satisfied with merely the moral support of the East India Company as representing British interests, and insisted on something more definite in the shape of an actual undertaking by the Company to support him with armed force, if necessary, against all outside attacks upon his sovereignty. Whether Mr. Light exceeded his instructions or not does not seem to be clear, but the fact remains that he did conclude a treaty to be ratified by the Company binding it to a defensive alliance with the King of Kedah, who in return formally handed over the island to the British, and who was to receive an annual

cash payment in lieu of certain trading monopolies in local products, which he had hitherto enjoyed.

In his book already referred to, Sir Frank Swettenham states that this "was the beginning of a great deal of trouble and infinite misery to thousands of innocent people," and goes on to say: "The cause of these untoward events was the cowardice of the East India Company, ending in a breach of faith which sullied the British name and weakened its influence with Malaya for very many years."

Sir Frank clearly shows how unsatisfactory matters were for the King of Kedah. This potentate had made over the island to its new owners, but up to 1789 no cash payment had been made, nor had he received anything in writing from the Company, who were apparently reluctant to ratify the treaty concluded by Mr. Light. No mention is made, however, in this volume, nor indeed in any books of reference on the subject, of the fact that by the time Cornwallis arrived in the East, the King's patience was exhausted; and that he was actually threatening war with the Company, and intended to employ Allies to assist him: and, indeed, he eventually did employ them. That this was the case would appear from correspondence between the Commodore and Mr. Francis Light.

Early in 1790 Cornwallis decided himself to visit certain outposts of the Empire which he knew Lieutenant Blair had surveyed, and where Captain Moorsom was then actively engaged in similar work. In February of that year we find him at Prince of Wales Island. That this first was only a flying visit is suggested by the fact that on this occasion no letters are written by him from there. It is to be assumed, however, that Cornwallis was fully informed as to the origin and purpose of the settlement, and that no doubt he had been made acquainted with the attitude of the King of Kedah. That Mr. Light took the first opportunity of telling him of his own difficult position may also be taken for granted, but that he knew until he got there that the King threatened war is improbable, or at any rate, there is nothing in his correspondence to show that he did know, or had ever been warned of this possibility by the Governor-General in Council.

Shortly after his arrival he received the following from Mr. Light:—

SIR,—

The boats which arrived on Sunday from Queda [old spelling] brought an answer to a Letter I sent the King a few days before the *Crown* arrived. The purport of my Letter requested that he would determine and stipulate what he required from the Company and not rashly make war which might in the end prove ruinous to Himself. His answer I have received. It is : “I have received your Letter requesting I would come to some determination, but I have wrote to the Commodore’s Brother—to the general—what I first required when you came to ask the Island in the Name of the Governor General, and to this day I have not changed my word.”

Merancandoo the Merchant who brought this letter informs me that the King had sent for the Lanoons, and that he only awaited the arrival of his Brother from Purlis. Qualla Morboo is the place appointed for a general rendezvous.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient Humble Servant,

FRANCIS LIGHT.

February 18th, 1790.

It is obvious that the King was anxious for the promises made by Light to be carried into effect. Cornwallis, a fortnight later, wrote to Governor-General in Council with a request to be allowed to purchase “A small decked boat of shallow draft, for piloting larger men-of-war into uncharted waters”; this was the *Despatch* already referred to. No mention is made of the above letter in this request. Whether he wrote privately to his brother one cannot say; there is no record of it. Perhaps he thought Mr. Light was unduly alarmed. The Commodore again visited Prince of Wales Island the following June, where, however, despite the alarming news brought by “The Merchant Merancandoo” the previous February, all was so far quiet. On November 24th, 1790, Cornwallis writes a friendly letter to Light from Port Cornwallis in the Andaman Islands. In it he complains of the ravages of scurvy amongst his men, and how Prince of Wales Island would have afforded a much better chance of their recovery, but that owing to the present state of affairs he was obliged “to be in the way of as quick a communication as possible with Bengal.” He sends the *Ranger* with this letter,

with orders to return with a supply of fresh meat and vegetables. She returns in due course with the following letter from Mr. Light, who is evidently more perturbed than ever :—

SIR,—

I am honored with Yours by the *Ranger*, Lieutenant Wales, who arrived here on the 9th Instant.

I am exceedingly sorry to learn the Scurvy has made so severe an attack upon your People and wish it had suited your convenience to have come here ; they would have had plenty of fresh provisions, Turtle and subacid fruits which are sovereign remedies in the Scurvy. The appearance of the *Crown* would likewise have prevented this Settlement from its present troubles, and being threatened distruction, our apparent Enemys are called Lanoons and consist of 37 large Prows from the Island Magindano, one of the Philippines, and twenty five others from various Places ; this Fleet sailed from Siack, a River on Sumatra opposite Malacca, to the attack of Pera ; the Dutch Cruizers luckily entered the River before them and gave the alarm to the Dutch Fort ; as the Dutch Cruizers carry 9 and 12 pounders the Prows were afraid to come in reach of their fire. They Landed in hopes the Malays of Pera would join them, but receiving no assistance they suddenly went off for two or three days and then returned, by this time fresh supplies had come from Malacca. The Enemy burnt and destroyed all the Houses about the River's Mouth, and carried off the people, they came to Laroot and about 8 Leagues to the Northward of Pera, they staid near fifteen days taking a number of Merchant Prows that were coming here : from Laroot they came to the River Kooroo about seven Leagues from this : from the Prows they plundered I learnt their intention was to come this way ; this made me detain the *Greyhound* after the *Princess Augusta*, a Ketch mounting 12 three pounders, was come to relieve her on this station.

The 26th Ultimo they appeared on the opposite shore, and some of them had been at Pry River just opposite to us. They took away several fishermen. I armed the *Dolphin*, put a detachment of Sepoys on board, and sent the three Vessels with two Long Boats and the *Royal Admiral* to drive them away. The Cruizers came up in the Evening, the Prows formed a Line at

about six hundred Yards distance, neither side made any attack ; they sent a small Boat on board the *Princess Augusta* and said they were friends and were going to Queda. After dusk the Prows weighed and ran off to the Southward. In the Morning they were out of sight. The Cruizers had scarcely returned when the Prows returned ; this I learnt from two people who made their escape from them. Before the Cruizers could get up to the Island again they were off. The next news I heard they had passed without the Island and were gone to the Boonting Islands near Queda. The Cruizers are now watching their motions, the King of Queda has staked the Mouth of his River and laid a Chain across, at the same time he has admitted the Lanoons into the Lolar River, which is close to Boonting Island, and under pretence of fear has stopped all supplies from coming here. The People in general are of Opinion that he has invited them, and promised the assistance of provisions, Arms and Ammunition with the Plunder of this place, which is not trifling. In various Goods and Merchandise and in Ships there is not less than three hundred Thousand Pounds. We have been obliged to rebuild the Fort, the old Materials being entirely rotten.

Such is our present situation : we have Cruizers armed with 2 and 3 Pounders, and without their Complement of Men, which are to represent Men of War. No fault is to be found with the people on board of them ; they do their utmost, but the Conduct of the Master attendant at Bombay, who is the Company's Naval Officer, is justly reprehensible. We cannot easily protect ourselves, but what a reflection it would be to suffer so many thousand People to be massacred who are come here in confidence of the British Protection ; and our Force is not sufficient at once to guard both the Sea and Land. The Chooliars Vessels who came from the Coast of Coromandel are quite defenceless, and if our Cruizers cannot prevent the Prows from coming in, they cannot preserve the Vessels.

I wrote to Lord Cornwallis for some assistance, and mentioned if one of the Frigates was to come here it would put us in perfect safety, these Prows cannot remain here after the month of January.

If it is not very inconvenient I should request the honor of your Company. We shall be able to afford sufficient refreshments

for the People, and we could then embark all our Sepoys and with light Vessels and Boats, and either destroy or drive away these People.

Yours, etc., etc.,

FRANCIS LIGHT.

This letter brings the following response from Cornwallis :—

“CROWN,” PORT CORNWALLIS, 18th December, 1790.

I am very sorry to hear that you are in a so unpleasant and alarming situation, and I should gladly have sailed immediately for your protection if I was not in hourly expectation of an Arrival which may bring me Accounts of Importance. I shall however if possible visit you.

The Commodore found himself unable to go, but recommended Mr. Blair to send the *Ranger* back to Prince of Wales Island for its defence. This ship was an armed sloop belonging to the East India Company, and Mr. Blair was the Company's Senior Officer at Port Cornwallis. Both were only nominally under the command of the Commodore, but with his usual tact he only “recommended,” knowing full well that his recommendation was tantamount to an order.

Cornwallis, however, appears to have altered his mind and taken a more serious view of the situation, for on January 5th, 1791, he was once more at Prince of Wales Island, from which place he writes at length to the Admiralty :—

SIR,—

Mr. Light, the superintendent of this place, informing me by letter of a number of Armed Prows having appeared off this Island, from Magindavio one of the Phillippine Islands, large and small above sixty, and that, from the King of Queda having upon various pretences stopped all supplies, and given Protection to those vessels, he conceived himself in great danger, and that, from private intelligence he had received, he apprehended that they meditated an attack upon this settlement, requesting that I would come to his assistance. I therefore sailed from the Andaman Islands the 25th past and arrived here the third instant, and should hope the Appearance of the *Crown* will prevent any attempt of the Kind alluded to in Mr Light's letter.

He writes a further letter to the Admiralty, dated March 12th, from the same place. An extract from this letter states :—

“Everything remains exactly in the same state, but the Government at Calcutta having sent a re-inforcement, I apprehend they will be now able to defend themselves if an attack should be made.”

This matter has been dealt with at some length, and most of the correspondence given, as it seems that from it there is a case to be made rather in favour of, than against, the East India Company, as is suggested by Sir Frank Swettenham. It cannot be denied that the King of Kedah had a grievance against the Company; but it is conceivable that, in view of his evidently hostile intentions against them, the Council refused to ratify the treaty as originally framed, and later, in the year 1791, effected another on not nearly such advantageous terms as far as the King was concerned. Reading the correspondence in conjunction with Sir Frank Swettenham's entertaining volume, one cannot feel that Mr Light made promises to the King on behalf of the Company which he could never carry out; but being an Englishman he was believed implicitly by a Malay. It will be remembered how the British retained (and still retain) a strip of territory on the mainland, as well as Prince of Wales Island (now more generally known by its old Malayan name), and how eventually, in 1821, Kedah was overrun by the Siamese, its people massacred and its King driven into exile.

Cornwallis himself discovered a new harbour on the N.E. Coast of the most northerly of the larger of the Andaman Islands, and there was subsequently an idea of giving up Port Cornwallis and moving the whole settlement at that place to what appeared to be the most suitable harbour of any he had seen. Writing to his brother, the Governor-General, on the subject, he said :—

“I am just return'd from visiting the Harbour at the North East end of this Island, which I confess I think a most excellent one, and vastly preferable for a fleet of Men of War to any I have seen in this country, and indeed I believe I might say full as good as could be wished. . . .”

And, proceeding to describe his adventures with the natives, continues :—

“ . . . I gave particular orders upon my arrival that the Natives should be kindly Treated, and They did not molest us

in our wooding and watering. Two mornings before we sail'd I sent over in the Barge to a Bay behind *Blairs Reef*, which They have called Phœnix Bay, a number of natives appeared and came unarmed to the side of the Boat ; we gave them all the cocoa nuts and other things we had in the Boat. They attempted to take the Iron stanchion of the awning, and we were obliged to keep Their hands off. They seem'd very good temper'd, and some of them were the best Looking Blacks I had ever seen, with open countenances, and we remark'd that they seem'd more familiar and friendly than others who Lived nearer the ships and received daily presents. Just as They Left us and waded to the shore, a man came down with a bow and arrows, making a great noise and appearing in a great passion. They immediately all took up their Bows and arrows and began shooting ; we were not very close to the shore, some went over, others struck the Boat, but no mischief was done, and I would not suffer them to be fired at. We picked up about twelve of the arrows and Back'd the Boat in. I then held them up to the Natives, to upbraid them for having behav'd so ill. They with the greatest eagerness held out their hands for us to return them ; I suppose to enable them to shoot at us again. . . .

“ . . . a midshipman, with two men from the *Ariel*, went up to trace a run, and as He reports met a number of the Natives. They shot an arrow through one of their hats, upon which They shot one, and ran back as fast as they could. I could receive no account from any but themselves ; it is therefore difficult to say how it happen'd. The Lower orders of the People are pretty near as ferocious as these poor wretches whom they call savages. It will therefore be hardly possible, when a number of people are employed, to bring Them to act upon one principal, one party perhaps will be acting with the utmost humanity, whilst another by their conduct will give them a very different opinion of us. From what I saw Latterly, I think they are more numerous than I had before imagined, and if they cannot be made friendly may be a great annoyance, particularly if they are at all enterprising. When we fired the musket over them they Duck'd in y^e water but did not go away. When the Boy that I mention'd before was taken He was swimming away ; they followed Him in a small boat ; He dived, and when He appear'd They fired at Him with a pistol until They shot Him through the nose and one of His

Eyes out. This was done by one of the Low White men contrary to Mr. Blair's direction, but it probably did not make a very favourable impression." . . .

Opinions at home as to advisability of a new naval base in the East seemed to vary. Howe was against it. He wrote to Cornwallis in April 1791 :—

"The plan you have formed for obtaining a perfect knowledge of the navigation and circumstances from whence advantage may be derived by an intelligent naval commander on your extensive station will supply you with materials which I am inclined to think few of your predecessors have been equally studious to acquire. And I shall have very great pleasure in the communication of any such particulars as you are at liberty and have leisure to transmit. . . .

"The Andamans and eastern coasts contiguous may possibly contain many much more desirable situations for shelter and refreshments. But I have always been of opinion that no more settlements should be made in such posts than we are able to defend with such force as is competent to resist almost every attack that could be made upon them. Establishments less considerable seem to me of little more effect than to point out to an enemy the extent of our resources, and subject us to disappointments."

Nothing seems to have been done in the matter. The new outbreak of war with France in 1793 was possibly the cause of the scheme being abandoned.

CHAPTER XI

1792-1793

PEACE with Tippoo having been signed, and there being no appearance of war elsewhere, most of the British men-of-war were sent home. Cornwallis took advantage of the situation to visit other places in his command, including certain Dutch settlements in Malaya, where he states, in a letter to his brother, that he found the attitude of the Dutch towards him and his officers "more friendly and very different to what it was in 1789." On his arrival at Madras in December of that year, he had the first inkling of the possibility of a fresh war with France, as he found a letter from his brother from Calcutta telling him that :—

"Mr. Baldwin, the Company's agent at Alexandria, talks of England's arming, but I see no grounds for such report in the *Courier de l'Europe*, except that Lord Hood was going out with five guardships and a few frigates to practise some new signals."

In February of this year Cornwallis was promoted to be Rear-Admiral of the White after thirty-eight years' service, and at forty-nine years of age. He was due to return home, and naturally his brother, whose term of office was also nearly expired, was anxious to return with him; and, indeed, wrote in March to the Admiral to return if possible to Bengal before August, "so as to allow me to take passage to England in the *Minerva* about the end of that month."

News of the horrors that were being perpetrated in France gradually leaked through to India. A certain Mr. Ley wrote to Cornwallis in March :—

"Bankruptcies in London have happened to the amount of five millions, and A Hull Bank has stopped payment. Paris in an uproar through want of bread. The mob broke open all the tradesmen's houses, set their own prices upon the goods, and

plundered everything. Policies were opened in the city with a great balance that there would be an end of the war, and that a regal government would be established in France in twelve months from Lady Day, 1793. The bankers refused to discount any paper for the present; the alarm in the Royal Exchange is beyond conception. A bankruptcy has taken place in Edinburgh to the amount of £200,000. Insurgencies and riots are breaking out every day [in France], and several thousands are determined to effect a counter-revolution. There are dissensions and riots in several parts of America, as a great many wish for a convention, and it is generally supposed that if General Washington was to die, there will be a civil war."

He goes on to state the following "occurrences":—

"The Channel and North Sea full of frigates. Rear Admiral McBride commands in the Downs, and has the management of the cruising frigates. French Privateers are fitted out, but generally captured before they get half across the Channel. The fleet fitting out with the greatest exertion; every town in England granting bounty to seamen and vieing with each other who can obtain the greatest number.

"No alteration in the Administration. The Opposition reduced to a mere fraction; the people of England firmly attached to the constitution . . . and declaring their sentiments in the most public manner. The Duke of Portland with the leading men of that party also supporting Administration against the levelling faction, which had nearly broke out into rebellion. The Duke of York with the Guards, 2,000 volunteers, and several regiments of cavalry and infantry, serving in Holland. The army, consisting of the Militia and regiments in England, mostly stationed on the coasts of Sussex, Kent and Norfolk, with an amazing train of light Artillery, part of them on a new construction being used on horse-back, and travel eight miles an hour.

"Dourmourier menaces the National Convention, used every epithet that could be made use of to the worst of people, and said no force then in France could prevent the United armies to be at Paris in three weeks; that he would march with his army in advance to establish the Dauphin on the throne."

Cornwallis at this time flew his flag on the *Minerva*, and the only other man-of-war on the station was the *Phoenix*. She required overhauling badly, and was in consequence ordered

home in March. Sir Richard Strachan, who commanded her, wrote the Admiral a very charming letter before leaving. He said :—

“To my public letter [he had written an official communication on some matters of routine] I beg to add a private one, and wish to express to you the sense I have of the many civilities I have received from you during the time I have been under your command. I have only to assure you that I will ever retain the most grateful Remembrances of your favors.”

According to the short memoir of the Admiral written by the author's grandmother and referred to in his foreword, Cornwallis used to say it was about this time of his life that he was nicknamed “Billy Go-tight” by the seamen. He gave as the reason for this sobriquet the fact that during the time he was in the hot climate of the East he rarely, if ever, touched wine or spirits. In fact, he was so temperate that on the principle of “*lucus a non lucendo*” his nickname suggested the reverse.

England declared war against France on February 1st of this year, a week after the execution of the unfortunate Louis XVI ; but as late as June news of the outbreak of hostilities had not yet reached India ; for, writing to his brother from Calcutta on June 8th, Marquis [he had recently been created Marquis] Cornwallis said :—

“If we have a war, I conclude that some frigates at least will come out with the notification ; and I have recommended to Sir Charles Oakeley, if we are superior at sea, to proceed immediately to the attack of Pondicherry, in which event, I am sure you will readily give all possible assistance by blocking up, . . .

“Unless we have the superiority at sea, I should not wish to engage in the siege, at least till I can come myself to the coast ; and, in the event of a war, whether they commence the siege without me or not, I should be glad to get to the coast as soon as I possibly can, and to embark for England the day after Pondicherry is taken.”

The following month the declaration of war was definitely confirmed ; as was natural offensive measures were immediately taken against the French, whose principal settlement in India was Pondicherry. Marquis Cornwallis was anxious to conduct land operations against this place himself, but the difficulty was

to get him down the coast in a ship capable of resisting any possible attack by a French frigate or privateer. The last thing that was wished for was that the Governor-General should be made a prisoner-of-war. Cornwallis, who had been on a visit to his brother in May of this year, had sailed for Madras without any definite knowledge as to peace or war. The latter was naturally alarmed at having no news of the *Minerva*. Writing from Calcutta on July 3rd, he said :—

“With the powers which the *Minerva* possesses both of sailing and fighting, I have no doubt if you were put on your guard you would be able to take care of yourself; but if you should fall in with your two Malabar acquaintances (both of which I understand to be hourly expected from Mauritius) and you should be unprepared and ignorant of the war, the consequences might be fatal.

“As it is of the utmost importance to take Pondicherry before the setting in of the Carnatic monsoon, I have directed that they should commence the siege as soon as they are ready, without waiting for me, but as in the meantime I am all impatience to get to the coast, I must entreat that you will do all you can to promote my wishes in a point which interests me so sensibly.”

He goes on to point out that he dared not venture himself “in any less secure conveyance than a frigate or twenty gun ship if any such should come out,” and then the broadest of hints : “If nothing should come you may perhaps fetch me yourself, as I think few objects can be more important for the public service than my speedy arrival on the coast.”

A week later he hears of the Admiral’s safe arrival, and wrote :—

“I have this moment received your letter of the 27th ult. ; and though I greatly rejoice at your arrival at Madras, I am put under considerable difficulties about my passage thither. I should be sorry to fall into the hands of such an enemy, but unless a frigate should arrive before the 7th of August, I shall embark in a prize that we have armed, and take my chance, and I trust that, if you hear of enemy’s frigates, you will keep the best look out for me that you can. I think we need not fear a privateer. If you should be able to send a vessel in time for me, I am sure you will do it.”

Two days later he thought better of it, and still in the hopes the Admiral would send for him, he wrote :—

“Having however reflected seriously on the impression which my capture would probably make on the native Powers, and the dangerous consequences with which it might be attended to the British interests in India, I do not think that I should be justifiable in embarking in a vessel which, by herself, would barely be a match for a stout privateer and would be an easy prey to two or no great force.”

It was, of course, impossible for Cornwallis to accede to the Governor-General's request. His first thought had to be, how he could most harass the enemy, and not whether he could turn his ship into a passenger boat. How he must have regretted sending his squadron home : but his orders from the Admiralty to reduce his establishment for the sake of economy were so specific that he had no alternative. He pointed this out to his brother, who realized the situation, for he wrote on August 3rd :

“I yesterday received your very kind letter by Manning, and notwithstanding my own anxiety, I am well convinced that you could not have acted otherwise, and I am very glad that you decided to take the part you have done, and I most earnestly hope you will succeed.”

The part that the Admiral took in the capture of Pondicherry is best described by his own account of it to the Admiralty. Writing from Madras Roads on September 10th, he said :—

“On the 19th I received a Packet from the Government at Madras, enclosing the copy of a letter from Mr. Baldwin, the British Consul at Alexandria, acquainting the Presidency that war had been declared by the French on the second of February, against England and Holland, and recommending it to them to act without delay, as he would make himself responsible for the consequence.

“I sailed from Trincomali the twenty first in the morning, and having called off Negapatam for Intelligence, I proceeded up the coast to Pondicherry, when in the morning of the twenty fourth, I took a ship, from the Mauritius, going to Pondicherry, having many shot and shells for that place. I continued off until the next day—the provisions on board being nearly expended, and judging it most proper to have a communication with the Governments in India, as soon as possible I proceeded on to

Madras, where I arrived the twenty sixth, and received letters from Lord Cornwallis at Bengal, in which he recommended upon the event of a war the blocking up Pondicherry previous to the attack, which he meant should commence as soon as possible, provided we were superior at Sea. I also received a letter from Sir Richard Strachan, Captain of His Majesty's ship *Phoenix*, saying that General Abercromby having declined his offer of service on the other coast, he had sailed for England the first of March.

"The *Minerva* therefore being the only ship belonging to His Majesty's in these seas, and the French having by all accounts four, if not five, Frigates and a Corvette at the Islands—the being able to prevent succors from being thrown in to Pondicherry appeared to me very doubtful. I had, however, immediately a communication with Sir Charles Oakley (The President) upon the subject—he was willing to put three India ships lately arrived from Europe under my direction for the purpose of blocking up Pondicherry, and promised to send them to me as soon as they were ready with about fifty Invalids and discharged soldiers on board each ship. I sailed in the *Minerva* the twenty ninth, the moment the Provisions and water were received on board. On the third of July I took a small Privateer called the *Concorde*, which had been fitted out from Pondicherry, as she seemed to sail pretty well, and having no vessel of any kind to send in shore after small vessels, which might attempt to land supplies, to send for Intelligence, or for any purpose whatever. I put Mr. Manning, first Lieutenant of the *Minerva*, to command her, and sent him to Madras for men, and to join me immediately.

"On the Ninth in the evening, I got off Pondicherry and saw a ship and a snow at anchor in the Road. On the eleventh Captain Whitby having offered repeatedly to go in with the boats to cut those vessels out of the road, he left the *Minerva* about one o'clock, the ship had unluckily sailed in the early part of the night, but the snow was brought out.

"Having picked up the boats, I stood out to look for my squadron of India ships, which had been seen that morning from the masthead in the south east quarter—on the thirteenth in the evening I got hold of them and brought them to anchor after dark. . . .

I continued to block up Pondicherry until the twenty

third of August, when it surrendered to the Army under the command of Colonel Braithwaite, having made no resistance after our batteries were opened.

“Captain George Oakes, of His Majesty’s Navy, who is in this country on leave to settle some private affairs, the moment he heard of the war, repaired to Madras and offered his services to join me off Pondicherry in a Merchant ship then in the Road, provided the Government of Madras would take her up, and equip her as far as they were able. The Government were, I believe, very ready to adopt any method to reinforce me, but as the ship had no English seamen on board, and none were to be got, it is probable they were of opinion that such a ship could not be of much use, and the owners appearing to take advantage upon the exigence of the service, by making rather an unreasonable demand, the matter was dropped, and Captain Oakes came immediately to the camp with the plan of a Rope Bridge, which he had formed for getting over the ditch at Pondicherry, and I should have put seamen under his direction for that service if there had been occasion. I think it but just to mention these exertions of Captain Oakes, whose zeal and activity has indeed been very conspicuous.”

It is amazing to think that the French, who had so great a superiority in ships of war in these waters, should have made no attempt to concentrate, or to have gone to the assistance of their most important settlement in India.

Sir Charles Oakley wrote on behalf of the Madras Government :—

“We beg you to be assured, Sir, that we entertain a very deep sense of your able and zealous Co-operation in this important undertaking, and that we fully perceive how essentially you have contributed to its success, by the active exertion of the Force under your Command, for preventing the French Garrison from receiving supplies of any kind by sea.”

Marquis Cornwallis had already signified his intention of returning to England immediately after the fall of Pondicherry ; and his wishing to be given a passage home in a British man-of-war seems to have been the cause of a second slight misunderstanding with his brother, to whom he wrote on September 15th from Madras :—

“As you have generally been in the practice of coming on

shore early in the morning, it is probable that you do not intend to visit us to-day ; and as we dine to-morrow with Sir Charles Oakeley, I shall not expect to see you before Tuesday. My only wish is, with temper and good humour (although I cannot with cheerfulness), to touch briefly on the subjects you have mentioned ; and I feel so perfectly guiltless on every article that I can hardly doubt my success in placing my conduct before you in a very different light from that in which you have hitherto seen it.

“No consideration should induce me to be the cause of your doing what does not appear to be right in your own mind, and I have therefore determined to take my passage in the *Swallow*, unless you should be relieved or ordered home before the period of our leaving this place ; in which case I should with great pleasure go with you. But as that is very unlikely, I shall probably only have to request you will see us safe off the land.”

Now that his country was at war it was obviously impossible for Cornwallis to leave his station without being relieved or ordered home. Both Hood and Chatham had left it to his discretion to do so, but hostilities having commenced the whole situation was altered, and one has no doubt that he told his brother so pretty plainly ; and that the best he could do for him was to escort him as far as he dared. Writing the following December from St. Helena, Marquis Cornwallis said :—

“We arrived here on the 15th without having seen a single sail from the time you parted from us till we made this island.”

The Admiral was himself relieved by Sir Peter Rainier in October, and sailed for England that month.

FOURTH PHASE

1794—1800

FROM REAR-ADMIRAL TO ADMIRAL

CHAPTER I

1794-1795

CORNWALLIS arrived in England on April 24, 1794, after an absence of over five years. His passage home had taken six months, but beyond raiding the island of Diego Garcia en route he had met with no adventure. Whether he had anticipated trouble or merely took a wise precaution one cannot say. But just before leaving India he made a will which, as stated in a memo dated "*Minerva* at sea, October 1793," and found amongst his papers, he had sent home to his solicitors. The memo further directs :—

"I desire that my Body if I die at sea may be sewed up in an old cot or canvass, and thrown from the gangway into the sea in the same manner as the seamen are buried."

He left his possessions to his friend Whitby and his wearing apparel to his servant, Joseph Parsons. Immediately upon his return he was the recipient of many letters of congratulation. Hood, who was at the time conducting operations against the French in the Mediterranean, wrote on May 22nd from the "*Victory* off Bastia" :—

"Accept my most sincere congratulations on your return to England, and I hope and trust in the most perfect health. . . . I have been engaged in very busy scenes, and have had difficulties innumerable to contend with, but, thank God, have very happily surmounted them all. Bastia has surrendered."

Cornwallis also heard from Nelson, who was serving under Hood, and to whom history has rightly given much of the credit for the successful operations which culminated in the fall of the town. The letter is dated Bastia, May 23rd :—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

I congratulate you most sincerely on your return to England, and shall rejoice to see you there. Our friend Lord Hood,

you will know, has been thwarted in this country in his endeavours to take Bastia, but to his honor with the troops embark'd to serve as marines, 40 artillery men and marines, 1,000 effective men, join'd to a close blockade, he has accomplish'd his object. We, who know his judgment, which no affected fears can warp, will not be surprised that success is the consequence. Our loss you will see has been most trifling.

Believe me with sincerest friendship, your most faithful
HORATIO NELSON.

When Nelson wrote that Hood "Has been thwarted in this country," he doubtless referred to the lack of enterprise shown by General Sir David Dundas, who, much to Hood's disgust, had refused to countenance an attack by land against Bastia with the forces under his command. This was an occasion where the Navy scored heavily against the Army, and did much to foment the ill-feeling between the two Services, which was brought to a climax the following year, when the Duke of York issued an unfortunate order. This will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter. Although Cornwallis was granted two months' leave on his return he does not appear to have gone on half-pay, as, according to the *Naval Chronicle* (1802), he still flew his flag on board the *Minerva*. In June he shifted it to the *Excellent*, and in company with a few frigates was employed on convoy duty. Howe was at this time in command of the Channel Fleet, and Cornwallis was therefore nominally under him. It must have been a source of great disappointment to the latter that he was not present on that "Glorious 1st of June," when the French were so signally defeated.

On July 12th Cornwallis was promoted Vice-Admiral of the Blue, and in August hoisted his flag on board the *Cæsar*. He was given command of a squadron of the Channel fleet specially detailed to harass enemy shipping. The *Cæsar* was evidently an unsatisfactory ship, for in December of this year he wrote to the Admiralty from Spithead:—

I beg that you will be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that although I was willing to embark on board the *Cæsar* to sail in the Fleet, I do hope now we are returned that Their Lordships will be pleased to take into



RETREAT OF ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, JUNE, 1795. "ROYAL SOVEREIGN" SHORTENING SAIL TO ALLOW
"BELLEROPHON" TO GO AHEAD.

From a painting by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., in the possession of the author.

consideration my peculiar situation, circumstanced as that ship is, and has been for some time past.

I therefore request Their Lordships, that myself, Captain Whitby, Lieutenants Marsh and Butt may be allowed to leave the ship.

I beg at the same time to express my readiness to serve on board any other ship, whenever Their Lordships please, and I can also answer for the Captain and two Lieutenants that they are equally ready and desirous of serving.

I am, Sir, your . . . etc., etc.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

The Admiralty minute to this request is curiously worded ; it tells him “ to remove his flag from the *Cæsar* and *put* it on board the *Prince* until further orders.” He soon shifted it again, as, on December 26th, he is told to hoist it on board the *Royal Sovereign*, a fine new ship of 100 guns. His letter to the Admiralty upon receipt of this order says :—

“ I am sensible of the honour their Lordships have done me by permitting me to hoist my flag on so desirable a ship.”

Captain Whitby, of course, went with him, and indeed had been his Flag-Captain on board all three previous ships. One of the first uses made of this ship after Cornwallis had hoisted his flag on board her was to assist in the suppression of a mutiny in the *Culloden*. Sir Peter Parker, who was in command at Portsmouth, sent him the following Admiralty order, dated December 28th :—

Having taken into consideration your Letters of the 6th & 7th Instant, the former inclosing one which you had received from Captain Troubridge of the *Culloden* containing the particulars of the Mutinous Conduct of part of that Ship's Company, and the latter inclosing a Report signed by Lord Hugh Seymour, and the Honourable Captain Pakenham upon the above subject ; We do hereby require and direct you immediately to order two of the three-decked Ships at Spithead to go alongside the *Culloden*, directing the Senior Officer to cause all the well disposed Men of her Company to be taken out, and a strong Party of Marines to be placed on board, and to use such other means as shall be judged best for extricating those Men who may be kept

below against their Consent ; And if, after having used his best endeavours to bring the Mutineers to reason, by expostulation, they shall still refuse to submit, You will direct him to use such means as shall be necessary for forcing them to Obedience, and for securing the Ringleaders.

Given under our Hands the 8th December, 1794.

At the beginning of this year Cornwallis found himself temporarily in command of the Channel Fleet. Howe, who was nominally in command, was sixty-nine years of age and in poor health. He was at Bath doing the cure. Bridport, his second in command, was on leave. Consequently the Admiralty corresponded direct with Cornwallis. Most of this was of a routine nature ; there is one curious case, however, of a leading seaman issuing a writ against a commissioned officer for having struck him. The letter, dated January 14th, is signed by Mr. Stephens, Secretary to the Board :—

SIR,—

Having communicated to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your Letter of the 13th Instant, inclosing one from S^r Rich^d Strachan, Captain of the *Melampus*, representing that her Master has been served with a Writ at the Suit of Peter Fisher, Captain of the *Forecastle*, for having struck him ; I am commanded by their Lordships to acquaint you that Mr Dyson, their Solicitor, is directed to take such steps as may be proper upon the occasion.

It would seem that at this date the most usual way of insulting a man was to threaten to pull his nose. The following letter to the admiralty deals with a case of this kind and is given because it affords an instance of Cornwallis's sense of humour. It is dated *Royal Sovereign* at Spithead, March 7, 1795 :—

“ The letter which I had the honour of sending you on the fourth instant, upon the subject of Lieutenant Newhouse, having insulted Dr. Trotter, Physician to the Fleet, was written after I had seen and examined Lieutenant Newhouse, and the Master of the *Charon*, on board the *Royal Sovereign*, in the presence of Dr. Trotter. The Lieutenant did not deny the accusation. He appeared to me to think that he had not done amiss in threaten-



RETREAT OF ADMIRAL CORNWALLIS, JUNE, 1795. "ROYAL SOVEREIGN" BEARING UP TO PROTECT
THE "MARS."

From a painting by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., in the possession of the author.

ing to pull Dr. Trotter by the nose for having complained to Sir Roger Curtis of his former conduct, in refusing the Physician the use of the Pinnacle, which request was made to enable him the better to perform his duty in visiting the ships. He said that the Doctor very often gave himself airs, and that he did not believe a Court Martial would hurt him. I imagine Their Lordships cannot wish me to examine the Lieutenant again, as he told me at the time he would make no concession to Dr. Trotter. I did not enter into the particulars of the airs he said Dr. Trotter had given himself as I imagined nothing could justify his going to Dr. Trotter's cabin, and threatening to pull him by the nose, which the Lieutenant did not deny, and the Master confirmed." The result was that Lieutenant Newhouse was superseded by the Admiralty. In February of this year Howe was granted leave to remain on shore on account of his health, and in a letter dated the 28th he formally apprised Bridport of this fact, saying :—

"The Charge and Government of the fleet will therefore remain with your Lordship during my absence."

An incident occurred in March of this year which gave further proof of Cornwallis's popularity with sailors. The men who had returned with him from India were anxious to remain with him, and sent him the following humble address :—

HONBLE SIR,—

Our presuming to take this liberty we hope you will excuse as we remain in the greatest suspense expecting to have the happiness of being under your Honour's command Again, as the whole of what remains of the *Minerva* Ship's Company would be happy to sacrifice their lives under your Honour's command, and hopes if in your power that your honour will be mindfull of those who are attached for your honour in every respect placing our confidence.

We remain your faithful servant,

By Subscribing ourselves the *Minervas* in General.

This the Admiral sent on to the Secretary to the Admiralty, with a covering letter :—

SIR,—

I enclose a letter which was brought to me from the *Excellent*. The men who came from India in the *Minerva* were turned

over to serve with me in that ship. I am unwilling to make an application which may be attended with inconvenience to the service, but if you will be pleased to communicate it to Their Lordships, it may serve to show that these poor fellows, tho' (like other men) they have their hours of ill-humour, are not insensible of favour and attention shewn to them.

Permission, however, was refused.

It would seem that at about this time the Admiralty definitely stopped all applications for leave made direct to the Board instead of through the Commanding Officer. For the following letter, dated March 2, 1795, was found amongst the Admiral's papers :—

SIR,—

I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to send you the enclosed Letters from Lord Cha^s Fitzgerald, Captain of the *Brunswick*, and the Hon^{ble} Tho^s Pakenham, Captain of the *Invincible*, requesting leave of absence from their duty to attend their private Affairs, and to acquaint you that their Lordships are pleased to permit you to give each of them a Week's Leave of absence if you have no objection thereto, provided their Ships are not of Rear Adm^l Harvey's Division; but to signify to the Captains & Officers of the Channel Fleet that no application for Leave of absence will be attended to in future that does not come through the Commanding Officer for the time being.

It will be remembered that Howe was not satisfied with the behaviour of some of his Captains on June 1st of the preceding year. Captain Molloy was the unfortunate officer of whom an example was to be made, and it was decided to try him by court-martial. Cornwallis was a personal friend of this officer, and for this reason was reluctant to act as one of his judges. He successfully did his best not to serve. The Court was convened for April 28th. On the 2nd, Cornwallis went on 14 days' leave. He applied for an extension, which was granted, subject to it being understood that he was to return in time for Molloy's court-martial. On the day of the trial he sent the following to Admiral Peyton :—

SIR,—

I beg leave to acquaint you that I am lame, and have not been out of my Room these Two Days ; I therefore do not consider myself at present able to go on board, and attend my Duty as a Member of the Court Martial at which you are to preside ; the Surgeon of the *Royal Sovereign* will (if called upon) relate any particular Circumstances you may desire to be informed of.

The court were evidently dissatisfied, and may have had some idea of the reason for Cornwallis's attitude. They called the surgeon in question, who certified that the Admiral was suffering from an attack of gout.

Molloy was found guilty and dismissed the Service.

CHAPTER II

1795

HOWE planned the operations which were designed to cover the disembarkation of a body of French emigrants on the coast of France. This force, consisting of some 4,000 men, armed by the British Government, was intended to foment civil war in France. Although the Navy carried out its part of the affair and successfully landed the troops off Quiberon, the whole expedition was a ghastly fiasco, and was cut to pieces by Hoche. Pitt, in his attempt to justify his action, said: "No English blood has been shed." Sheridan, in his reply to this statement, said: "That is true, but English honour has been shed from every pore." Howe's strategical plan was that Cornwallis should watch L'Orient, Belleisle and that part of the Bay of Biscay; Bridport was to watch Brest; while Sir John Warren was actually engaged in covering the transports and securing a landing. Cornwallis left Spithead on May 26th, his squadron consisted of the *Royal Sovereign* (100), the *Triumph*, *Mars*, *Brunswick*, *Bellerophon*, each of 74 guns, and the *Pallas* and *Phæton*, frigates. Considering that the main French fleet were supposed to be in Brest, and that the most important part of the undertaking was to prevent the convoy of troopships from being interfered with, it seems inexplicable why Bridport did not sail with the whole of the Channel fleet at the same time. He was in sufficient strength to engage or blockade the enemy. As it was, he did not put to sea until some ten days later.

The French, whose secret service was good, were probably aware of the intended expedition, and were on the look-out for it. As matters turned out, Cornwallis narrowly escaped annihilation, and only saved his squadron by his indomitable pluck and resource.

His first encounter with the enemy occurred a fortnight after

he had left Spithead, and on June 11th he wrote to the Admiralty:—

“In the morning of the seventh a sail was seen again to the Eastward. I made the signal for the *Phæton*, *Pallas* and *Kingfisher* to chase, and followed them with the Line of Battleships, it was blowing fresh from the north. As we came in with the land several large ships were seen under sail, which proved to be a French squadron consisting of three line of battleships, six Frigates, a Brig, Sloop and cutter; some of them were at first standing off the shore, but unfortunately the wind was fair for them to get into Belleisle Road, where I saw several large ships at anchor. We had got very near the enemy's ships, and I had hopes at first we should have got up with them before they could have reached their Port, and I made the signal for the ships to form for their mutual support and engage the enemy as they came up. The *Phæton* fired several shot, which the Battle ships returned from their sterns.”

In standing off he fell in with a convoy under the protection of three frigates; these pushed round the south end of Belleisle and saved themselves by running in shore among the shoals, but eight of the convoy were taken. On June 17th Cornwallis fought the engagement of his life. The following account of it is in his own words, and formed his dispatch to the Admiralty:—

SIR,—

I have the Honor of acquainting you for the Information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that on the sixteenth in the Morning, standing in with the Land near the Penmarks, I sent the *Phæton* ahead to look out for any of the Enemy's Ships upon the Coast, and the *Bellerophon* to follow and support Her, both those Ships having Pilots on board. I stood after Them with the Rest of the Ships. At ten the *Phæton* made me a signal for seeing a Fleet ahead, and afterwards that they were of Superior Force, but as she did not bring to, or return to join me, according to the Instruction attached to that Signal, I imagined Captain Stopford had made it more from the *Number* than the *Force* of Ships seen, and was standing on to make them plainer; suspecting from the Number of Frigates I had seen some days before, that there were not many Ships of the Line—as well as from the Reports made by my Officers when they came from the

mastheads. The *Phæton* presently after brought to, upon which I made the signal to haul to the wind upon the Starboard Tack ; at this time I could see the Hulls of the strange sails—Thirty were counted, and some of them had all their sail out upon a wind, being directly to leeward of us. I stood upon the starboard tack with all our sail, keeping the Ships collected. Captain Stopford has been very alert and attentive during the whole time He had been with me. I therefore knew when He brought to He must have seen clearly, and I enquired by Signal their Force ; He answered thirteen Line of Battle Ships, fourteen Frigates, and there were two Brigs and a Cutter, in all thirty sail ; near half of them tacked in shore in the afternoon, the wind fell very much, and came round to the Northward, off the Land, and of course brought those Ships of the Enemy (which had tacked) to windward, and the others laid up for us. They were seen in the Morning [of the 17th] before it was daylight upon both Quarters of the Squadron. I had called and sent to the Ships in the Evening, when it was almost calm, that I meant to lead during the night, the better to accomplish any movement of tacking or altering the Course (if a favorable opportunity should offer) without signal.

It was my intention to place the *Brunswick* and *Bellerophon* (the two worse sailing ships) in the Van, the *Mars* and *Triumph* (being very good sailing ships) astern of me, but finding the *Brunswick* could not get past me without stopping the whole, I desired Lord Charles Fitzgerald to form astern. The *Bellerophon* (which ship also sailed very ill) got past me at last, upon my yawing to fire at the Enemy. At nine in the morning one of the French Line of Battle Ships began to fire upon the *Mars*. Their Frigates were ranged up abreast of us to windward except one, which kept to Leeward and ran up upon the Larboard Quarter of the *Mars*, then yawed and fired, which was frequently repeated. This was the only Frigate that attempted any thing ; the Line of Battle Ships came up in succession, and a tearing fire, with intervals, was kept up during the whole day. In the Evening they made a shew of a more serious attack upon the *Mars* (which ship had gotten a little to leeward) and obliged me to bear up for Her Support ; this was their last effort, if anything they did can deserve that appellation. Several shot were fired for two hours after, but they appeared to be drawing off, and before sunset their

whole Fleet had tacked, and were standing from us. The *Mars* and *Triumph*, being the sternmost Ships, were of course more exposed to the Enemy's fire, and I cannot too much commend the spirited conduct of Sir Charles Cotton [an old friend of Cornwallis's, subsequently a distinguished Admiral; commanded the Channel Fleet in 1811] and Sir Erasmus Gower, the Captains of those Ships—the former's conduct was intrepid and He had every disadvantage of a new formed Ship's Company. The steady conduct of the *Triumph* was admirable—Sir Erasmus Gower treated the scattered fire of the Enemy with the utmost contempt, and by firing single well directed Guns, the Enemy's Ships were deterred from approaching. Lord Charles Fitzgerald also in the *Brunswick* kept up a very good fire from the after Guns, but that ship was the whole time obliged to carry every sail, I was therefore unwilling to let Her drop, as the loss of even a Studdingsail Boom then would have been of importance to the Squadron. The *Bellerophon* being nearly under the same Circumstances, I was glad to keep her in some measure as a reserve; having reason at first to suppose there would be full occasion for the utmost exertions of us all, and being rather ahead of me was not able to fire much, I considered that ship as a treasure in store, having heard of Her former Achievements, and observing the spirit manifested by all on board when she passed me join'd to the activity and zeal shewn by Lord Cranstown during the whole Cruise. I am also much indebted to Captain Whitby for His Activity and unremitted Diligence on board the *Royal Sovereign*. The Frigates shewed the greatest alertness. I kept the *Pallas* near me to repeat signals, which Captain Curzon performed very much to my satisfaction; indeed I shall ever feel the impression which the good Conduct of the Captains, Officers, Seamen, Marines, and Soldiers in the Squadron has made on my mind. And it was the greatest pleasure I ever received to see the spirit manifested by the men, who, instead of being cast down at seeing thirty sail of the Enemy's Ships attacking our little Squadron, were in the highest spirits imaginable. I do not mean the *Royal Sovereign* alone—the same Spirit was shewn in all the Ships as they came near me, and altho' (circumstanced as we were) we had no great reason to complain of the Conduct of the Enemy, yet our men could not help repeatedly expressing their Contempt of them. Could common prudence have allowed me to let loose

their valour I hardly know what might not have been accomplished by such men. Little damage has been received by the ships in general, except the sterns having been very much shook by firing the Guns. The *Mars* reports twelve men wounded, but none killed, and her Rigging and sails cut a good deal, and the mainmast, fore, and foretop yards wounded. The *Triumph* has shifted and repaired some of Her sails, but any damage she has received is so trifling (at least in Her Captain's Eye) that Sir Erasmus Gower has not thought it worth reporting; indeed the cool and firm Conduct of that Ship was such that, it appeared to me, the Enemy's Ships dared not to come near Her. It has blown hard from the N.E. since I parted from the French Fleet. I take the first opportunity of sending this by the *Phæton*, as, upon hearing that the French Fleet are at sea, their Lordships may be under apprehensions for the safety of these ships.

I have the honor to be, etc., etc.,

WM. CORNWALLIS.

This is the dispatch of a brave man. He takes no credit to himself but gives it all to others. He appreciated the appalling risk his squadron had been in, and that, despite the eagerness of all ranks under him to fight even against so vastly superior force, to risk an engagement would have been suicidal. How the British sailors must have despised the French on this occasion for their want of enterprise!

The Admiralty, after having received news of this engagement, wrote the following letter, dated June 26th, to Cornwallis, who by this time had arrived at Cawsand:—

SIR,—

I received last night by Captain Lindsay of the *Phæton*, and immediately communicated to my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 19th Inst., acquainting me, for their Lordship's Information, of your Proceedings in execution of the Orders you had received, and of your having on the 16th Inst., off the Penmarks, fallen in with the Enemy's Squadron, consisting of thirteen Sail of the Line and fourteen Frigates, besides smaller vessels, and that after a partial Action on the next day, you so conducted your Squadron as to prevent the Enemy from availing himself of the advantages which his great superior-

ity of Force naturally afforded him : And in return I have it in command from their Lordships to inform you that they very highly approve of your Conduct, and that they feel the greatest satisfaction at the Account you have given of the judicious and spirited Behaviour of the Officers and Men serving under your Command on that critical Occasion.

I also received this Morning your two Letters of the 11th and 24th Inst.—the former giving Information of another Squadron of the enemy's Ships which you had fallen in with off of Belleisle, and of the success which had attended your proceedings ; and the latter acquainting me of your having, for the reasons therein mentioned, proceeded with the Ships under your orders into Cawsand Bay, having previously dispatched the *Crescent*, which had joined you, to Lord Bridport, with Information of your Intentions : And I have their Lordships further commands to acquaint you that they approve of your proceedings and are pleased with your success.

I am, Sir, yours etc., etc.,

EVAN NEPEAN.

Although he made no mention of it in his dispatch, according to James's *Naval History*, it was to some extent due to a trick that the Admiral was able successfully to extricate his squadron from its perilous position. Vol. i, p. 268, reads :—

“ On the 17th, in the morning, the British frigate *Phæton* was detached ahead of her squadron, to try the effect of a ‘ ruse-de-guerre,’ which we will proceed to describe.

“ Having got to the distance of some miles, the frigate made the signal for a strange sail west-north-west ; soon afterwards for four sail ; and, finally, the well-known signal for a fleet, by letting fly the topgallant sheets, and firing two guns in quick succession. At 3 p.m., being then very far ahead, the *Phæton* made the private signal to the supposed fleet ; and then, by the tabular signals, with which the French were well acquainted, she communicated to her own admiral that the fleet seen were friends, and, at 4 h. 30 m., that they were ships of the line. The *Phæton* then repeated the signal, as from the admiral to call in the strange fleet, by hoisting the Dutch ensign, and shortly afterwards shortened sail.

“ At 6 p.m., as a singular coincidence, there actually appeared,

in the direction to which the *Phæton's* signals had been pointing, several small sail."

So far from the French officers denying this, several of them, when afterwards in company with British officers, strenuously insisted that it was Lord Bridport's fleet, which they knew was at sea, that they saw, and that that, and that alone, was the cause of their not following up their advantage.

Villaret-Joyeuse was the Admiral in command of the French Fleet on this occasion. De Bruix was his second.

After this engagement Cornwallis put into Cawsand Bay, according to the instructions he received the previous May. It is curious that before sailing he should have received orders both from Howe and the Admiralty which were to some extent conflicting. He had been ordered by Howe to cruize for a month and return to Spithead. The Admiralty, as the following letter from the Admiral to the Secretary shows, told him to make for Cawsand Bay. It is dated Spithead, May 25th:—

"I have had the honour of receiving Their Lordship's Commands contained in your letter dated the twenty fourth instant, to put into Cawsand Bay instead of returning to Spithead at the expiration of my intended cruise, which I shall most carefully obey. Also directions to leave a rendezvous to know where to meet me, or any ship I may send, for the purpose of receiving any instructions Their Lordships may be pleased to send. I beg to observe that my orders from Admiral Earl Howe are to proceed off Scilly and then open sealed orders. Off that Island is therefore the only place I can at present point out."

Again Howe, in his instructions to Lord Bridport early in June, mentions that Cornwallis had been ordered to cruise for three weeks, whereas his specific instructions were for one month. There seems to have been indifferent staff work somewhere. That Howe, as nominal Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, should have been allowed to conduct a campaign from his private address on shore, when the Admiralty were apparently doing the same seems altogether extraordinary. This want of cohesion may have been the cause of Bridport's not putting to sea earlier. Cornwallis, however, appears to have ignored Howe, for upon arrival at Cawsand he wrote direct to the Admiralty on the 24th, the reply to which has already been mentioned:—

“I request that you will be pleased to acquaint the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that having dispatched the *Phæton* with the account of my meeting with a French Fleet, from which time it had blown strong from the North East, which had driven me considerably to the westward. On the 20th the wind came round to the southward and I steered for the Channel—the next morning I fell in with the *Crescent*. Captain Buller delivered to me an order from Admiral Earl Howe, containing directions for my further proceedings, but from the change of circumstances since the date of them, the enemy having so strong a force in the Bay, I apprehended it would be highly improper in me to attempt to put them now into execution, by proceeding to the Station pointed out in the Commander-in-Chief’s Instructions.

“By the *Crescent* I also received a letter from Admiral Lord Bridport, dated the ninth instant, acquainting me that he was upon the point of sailing from Spithead with sixteen sail of the line, which force being much superior to the Enemy’s Fleet, I am in hopes His Lordship will have fallen in with them after they parted from me. The *Brunswick* and *Bellerophon* were obliged to cut away their Bower Anchors and start their water, endeavouring to make them sail better, when the enemy were coming up with us, and the ships being in want of some refitting, I thought it best to let the *Crescent* go to Lord Bridport, and proceed at once with the Squadron to Cawsand Bay, according to my former instructions, from whence I shall be ready to sail whenever I receive orders for that purpose. I have this moment anchored in Cawsand Bay.”

His hopes that Bridport would fall in with the same enemy that he had been forced to retreat from were justified ; and had in fact already happened. On the 23rd an engagement was fought between the two fleets in which the English were victorious, capturing three French line of battleships.

CHAPTER III

1795

CORNWALLIS's already fine reputation was greatly enhanced by his latest exploit. Although no victory was attached to it, to have escaped scatheless from an enemy many times his superior was no mean achievement. As a Flag officer he had proved himself in India to be a good administrator; he had now in a similar capacity proved himself a sound tactician.

Sir Charles Middleton [afterwards Lord Barham], who was at this date First Sea Lord, wrote the following minute concerning the affair :—

30th June, 1795.

I have read with much attention Vice-Admiral Cornwallis's journal, and think his conduct so judicious in the management of his squadron that I should propose its being bound separate, and marked "Vice-Admiral Cornwallis's Retreat."

In less skilful hands that squadron must have been lost, and which points out the necessity of sending these squadrons under experienced flags, and the ships as far as can be of equal rate of sailing.

If what I have proposed be adopted, we shall have time to form another line-of-battle squadron by Admiral Cornwallis's return.

He also wrote a personal letter to Cornwallis, saying :—

"I should have congratulated you much sooner on your very judicious and honourable retreat from so superior a force of the enemy, but have been confined with the gout. I have read your journal with the utmost satisfaction, and it is proposed to bind it up separate, to be kept at the Admiralty as a model of professional conduct."

Howe also wrote, and his letter goes rather to prove what has been suggested in the last chapter. It is dated June 30th, Porter's Lodge, and marked "Private":—

"Not informed of any other circumstances besides those contained in your letter to which my official answer was sent two days since, I was ignorant until I went to town yesterday of the just subject of congratulation which the conduct of your little squadron, when in the most perilous situation, establishes your title to, in public acknowledgment.

"That you will be apprised of it from higher and more acceptable authorities I have no doubt, but I could not, on such an occasion, omit the tender of my mite of applause."

The letter which Howe refers to as having received from Cornwallis was short, and merely stated that the squadron under his command had met with the main French fleet from which it had escaped with great difficulty. Considering that the two men were, or certainly had been, good friends, and that Howe was his nominal commanding officer, it is curious that Cornwallis did not send him a copy of his dispatch to the Admiralty. Howe evidently resented it. This being the case his letter is generous. It is possible that Cornwallis disapproved of the dual command, but there is nothing in his papers to show that this was so. In addition to these semi-official letters, he received many others of a congratulatory nature. The first was from his old friend, Admiral J. Forbes, dated June 27th. It reads:—

"I should be wanting to myself if I did not attempt to express my sincere rejoicing on the success of your late transactions, and congratulating you on your recent accession of glory and fame.

"Though the public are used to expect much from you, they could not possibly expect what is not in the nature of things, that with all your acknowledged firmness and abilities, you should repulse an enemy near three times stronger than yourself, and sailing better, and thereby made a retreat deserving of a triumph.

"The happy incident had almost turned the head of your very sincere and affectionate friend, Mr. Pole. He came to me, and ran about the whole day to communicate it to your friends, and having copied an account of it from a letter from Captain Stopford, he could not proceed in reading it to me without frequent interruptions from tears of joy."

The Mr. Pole mentioned had served under Cornwallis and afterwards became Lord Mornington. He wrote :—

“I cannot resist writing you a few lines to congratulate you from my heart upon your late glorious proceedings with the French fleet. You will easily believe that there was no man in England made more, or, I should rather say, so happy by the accounts of your success as I was ; though I flatter myself no person alive had a better right not to be surprised at it. Indeed it so happened that when I heard the French fleet was at sea, and apprehensions were entertained for your safety, I predicted the consequences in case you met them pretty much as they fell out. Your letter, which I read with delight in Saturday’s *Gazette*, reminded me of old times, and it is no small gratification to me to hear all the world applaud the clearness and modesty of your accounts, at the same time they do justice to the forcible and handsome manner in which you write of the conduct of the ships under your command. I can scarce bring myself to feel that I am not still under your protection, but, though circumstances have long withdrawn me from it, I shall ever consider your fame and fortune as things nearest my heart. For be assured, dear Sir, that if my own father had distinguished himself as you have done, I could not have felt more happy than I do.

“I know you hate flattery, but when a man feels as I do he cannot refrain from expressing some of his convictions, and I rely upon that goodness which in former days has excused many of my errors, to forgive my troubling you with my praises, which, however, I won’t allow to be flattery, for they are sincere.”

Marquis Cornwallis wrote from Warley Camp :—

“I most sincerely wish you joy and assure you that your conduct in your late ‘rencontre’ with the French fleet will do you more honour, in the mind of every reflecting man in this kingdom, than ten ordinary victories with equal or superior force.

“When Mr. Windham expressed his apprehension lest you should fall in with the enemy, when we first received an account of their force and of their steering towards the line where you were supposed to be cruising, I ventured to say to him : ‘You need not be much afraid ; it will not be easy to get him into a scrape.’ As I understand that you are going to sea very soon, and may perhaps not receive this letter, I shall only add my most earnest wishes for your welfare and success.”

His other brother, the Bishop of Lichfield, wrote twice to congratulate him. In one of his letters he said :—

“ At the birthday the Queen enquired much after you, and was very civil about you.”

Sir Charles Saxton [commanded a ship under Hood alongside Cornwallis in 1781–2; they were great friends], Naval Commissioner at Portsmouth dockyard, wrote on June 28th :—

“ We have had such various accounts of your ‘ rencontre ’ with the enemy that we hardly know which to believe, but you will readily believe that we cleave to that which flatters our wishes most, and for the detail and particulars we will wait till your squadron arrives here. In the meantime, we cannot help offering our earnest congratulations that you are so very honourably out of the scrape, of which nobody seems to have the smallest inclination to dispute, and are perfectly quiet and confident that in this instance our naval character has suffered no diminution, nor [is] in the least degree impaired, but has experienced every addition of glory and honour that could be derived from the event under all its circumstances.

“ We expect to see you every hour, and are big with expectation that Lord Bridport will be fortunate enough to finish a work you so nobly began. Since writing the above, the news, imperfectly also detailed to us, of my Lord Bridport’s success, following (and in consequence) so close upon the heels of your own, has just now reached Portsmouth, and set us all agog.”

Lord Spencer, who was First Lord, wrote a very charming letter, dated July 12th, from the Admiralty :—

Though I have only time to write a few Words, I cannot suffer the opportunity escape me of a Messenger going to you to add, before you sail again, my tribute of acknowledgment to you to that of the whole Nation, which you have so well and honourably deserved, by the retreat you have so ably and gallantly conducted in the Face of an Enemy so much superior in Force to the Squadron under your Command. Every one who has read your Account of it, and still more those who have had an opportunity of seeing the particular details of it contained in your Journal, must agree in placing it amongst the foremost of those brilliant Actions which rank the decisive superiority of the British Navy to that of any other Country, and I am persuaded there is no one

in the Kingdom who does not entertain the same opinion of your Merit in the Conduct of this engagement, and of the valour and discipline of the Officers and Men under your Command.

Nothing but the greatest pressure of business sent has prevented my sooner conveying to you my feeling on the subject, and assuring you that I am, with great Respect, your very obed. and humble servant,

SPENCER.

This was quickly followed by another, dated the same day, written after he had seen the King :—

“ Since I wrote to you by the Messenger this morning, I have had an opportunity of laying before His Majesty in a more particular manner the details of your *Manœuvres* then in the presence of the enemy on the 16th and 17th ulto., and have the satisfaction of being commanded by His Majesty to inform you that His Majesty has been graciously pleased to nominate you for the vacant Ribband of the Order of the Bath in consideration of the very gallant Service performed by you on that occasion.

“ I have great pleasure in being charged with this communication.”

Cornwallis wrote and declined the honour offered him, but there is no draft of this particular letter in existence. It was characteristic of the man to refuse it. He had no wish to be churlish ; he just felt he did not deserve it, and as the following and still more pressing letter from Spencer shows, he evidently said so. The First Lord's second letter is dated July 6th, and reads :—

“ In answer to the letter which I had the Honour of receiving from you this morning, in which you appear very desirous of declining the acceptance of the Red Ribband which I had been authorized by His Majesty to propose to you, I hope I shall not appear to you to press with too much indiscretion, if I repeat to you in the strongest terms the Desire entertained by all His Majesty's Servants that you would accept of that Distinction, not because they suppose that such a Decoration would prove particularly desirable to you in itself, but because they wish the World to know that Merit such as that which you have displayed on this occasion is the best and strongest claim to a Distinction of this kind, and though you are pleased to say that there are

others more deserving, they are desirous of making it appear that there is no one on whom they think they can with more propriety advise His Majesty to bestow this honorable Mark of his Favour than yourself.

“Being persuaded that in saying I not only speak the wishes of all my colleagues in Office, but at the same time express His Majesty’s Wishes, I trust that you will, on reconsidering the subject, allow me to report to him your acceptance of the Honour intended.”

The draft of Cornwallis’s reply to this exists. He wrote :—

MY LORD,—

I had the Honour of receiving Your Lordship’s most obliging Letter yesterday, when the *Venus* joined the fleet, but not in time to return Your Lordship thanks by the *Kingfisher*, which sloop I understand Left us the same evening for England.

I beg leave again to express my sense of the Honour His Majesty was graciously pleased to intend for me, by proposing to give me the order of the Bath. I should be exceedingly hurt if it should be thought that I did not entertain the Highest respect for it, but I am, my Lord, unhappily of a turn of mind that would make my receiving that Honour the most unpleasant thing imaginable, and therefore, whilst I thank Your Lordship (which I do most sincerely) for the obliging and very flattering manner in which You have been pleased to mention it to me, I must again Humbly solicit permission to decline accepting it—and I shall endeavour to suppress my Vanity by not making it known that such a distinguished mark of His Majesty’s favour was intended.

Spencer had to take this as final, for he replied, saying :—

“I will not fail to lay before his Majesty on the first opportunity what you have charged me to say on the subject of your declining the order of the Bath, which I have no doubt His Majesty will be graciously pleased to receive with his usual condescension and goodness.”

The last paragraph of Cornwallis’s letter was apparently a polite hint to Spencer to remain silent on the subject. He probably did, and destroyed the drafts or copies (if there were any) of his letters to the Admiral, as they do not appear in the

Spencer papers, nor is there any record in the Admiralty archives that the honour was ever offered. Cornwallis certainly "suppressed his vanity," as in not a single letter from any of his relations or friends is mention made of the matter. Nor in any of the short memoirs written of him is it even hinted at.

Writing to a friend after hearing of this retreat, Collingwood said :—

"It is extraordinary that Cornwallis, than whom no man stands higher for bravery and good conduct in action, should have established his character more by his retreats than by his victories."

This was true, and no doubt Cornwallis felt it keenly. It may be that this was the real reason why he refused the distinguished mark of honour which the King had wished to bestow on him. He felt himself as capable of beating the enemy, given the opportunity and the necessary strength to accomplish it, as any Flag officer in the Service. Before he accepted honours at his Sovereign's hands he wanted to feel sure in his own heart that he had done something which would justify his accepting them. His mind must have gone back fifteen years. He thought of his escapes from La Motte Piquet and De Ternay, and now the same thing had happened again with Villaret-Joyeuse. Was it always to be his fate to meet the enemy in superior numbers, and have to get himself out of an awkward situation? One is convinced that he felt his hour would come, but until it did, and he succeeded, he would accept no rewards which, rightly or wrongly, he considered were hitherto unearned.

CHAPTER IV

1795

It was not until the following November that Cornwallis received the thanks of both Houses of Parliament for his achievement. These are couched in the usual terms. But the Lord Chancellor's and the Speaker's covering letters and the Admiral's reply to the former are worth giving in full :—

SIR,—

I am commanded by the House of Lords to communicate to you their Unanimous Resolution of Thanks for the great Abilities, Judgement and determined Bravery you displayed in the Conduct of a Squadron of His Majesty's Fleet, when in presence of a superior Fleet of the Enemy on the 16th and 17th days of June last, and also to Transmit to you the Unanimous Resolutions of Thanks to the Captains and Officers of the Fleet under your Command for their Bravery and Gallant Conduct and of Approbation and Acknowledgement of the Services of Seamen, Marines and Soldiers on board the Ships under your Command on the 16th and 17th days of June last.

The Qualitys so eminently displayed on an Occasion so Glorious to the British Navy are particularly marked in the Order which I have the Honour to execute with a Satisfaction equal to the Respect and Esteem which such Qualitys exerted for the Publick Service must always inspire.

I have the honour to be, Sir, etc., etc.,

LOUGHBOROUGH.

The Admiral replied in the following terms :—

MY LORD,—

I have had the honour of receiving Your Lordship's Letter with the vote of thanks of the House of Lords upon the Conduct

of a Squadron of His Majesty's Ships under my orders when in the presence of a French Fleet on the sixteenth and seventeenth days of June Last.

I beg Leave to assure Your Lordship that I most sensibly feel the very High Honour confer'd upon me by the Vote of the House of Lords. But I cannot my Lord take merit to myself upon the occasion—It was the undaunted spirit of the Captains, Officers and Men of every description on board those Ships whose firm Countenance it appear'd was sufficient to deter the Enemy. I will not fail to communicate to them the distinguished and Honourable manner which it has pleased the House of Lords to reward their good services.

Permit me, my Lord, at the same time to express my sense of the Obliging manner in which your Lordship (zealous whenever the Honour and interest of the Country is in the smallest degree concern'd) has been pleased to Convey the thanks of the House of Lords to me.

Addington was Speaker of the House of Commons, and wrote on November 11th :—

“I have the honour of transmitting to you the enclosed resolutions, which express the high and unanimous sense entertained by the House of Commons of your judicious and gallant conduct on the 16th and 17th days of June last, when in the presence of a superior fleet of the enemy ; and likewise of the spirited exertions of the officers, seamen, marines and soldiers, who served under your command on those days. Allow me to assure you, that I have great satisfaction in obeying the commands of the House, by conveying to you this distinguished testimony of the approbation and gratitude of your country.”

There is no draft of Cornwallis's reply to this in existence. Lord Romney, who was a friend of the Admiral's, moved the resolution in the House of Lords ; from the following letter this appeared to have annoyed Cornwallis, who, it will now be realized, hated publicity, especially when it was flattering. Romney wrote on November 10th :—

Having been absent from London for three or four days on a Visit to our Friend Powis's at Lilford is the reason of my not

having received your obliging letter before this day. I hope you will readily excuse me for the part I took in the House of Lords relating to yourself and the distinguished small Fleet under your Command, when I assure you there was but this one opinion both amongst the Officers of your Profession as well as amongst all Englishmen. That no Fleet deserved more the thanks of their Country than that you had the Honor to command ; knowing this I only did my duty in giving Ministers an opportunity (which they very readily took hold of) of pointing out to Europe another occasion where the Abilities, Judgement and determined Bravery of our Naval Officers and Seamen rose superior to all difficulties. I have fairly told you the Motives for my conduct with which I hope you will not be displeased.

Believe me, Dear Sir,

Your much obliged and faithful, humble Servant,

ROMNEY.

To this day one of the “ Ballads of the Fleet ” is called *Billy Blue*, and it seems appropriate to give it in full. It was written some time after the event, as Cornwallis was not nicknamed “ Billy Blue ” until 1804, and is taken from an essay on Cornwallis by Admiral R. Anstruther.

It was just at break o’ day,
 We were cruising in the Bay,
 With Blue Billy in the *Sov’re*n in the van,
 When the French fleet bound for Brest,
 From Belleisle came heading west—
 ’Twas so, my lads, the saucy game began.
Billy Blue—
 Here’s to you, Billy Blue, here’s to you !

Washing decks was hardly done,
 When we heard the warning gun,
 And we saw ’em, black and clear against the sky ;
 Twelve big ships of the line,
 And with frigates, twenty-nine,
 On the easterly horizon drawing nigh.
Billy Blue, etc.

We'd the *Triumph* and the *Mars*,
 And the *Sov'ren*—pride of tars,
Billy Ruff'n, and the *Brunswick*, known to fame;
 With the *Pallas*, and the *Phæton*,
 Frigates that the flag did wait on—
 Seven ships to uphold Old England's name.
Billy Blue, etc.

From the *Phæton* frigate first,
 In a flash the numbers burst,
 As the signal bunting "broke" and fluttered free;
 But we cheer'd from ship to ship,
 And we set the guns to strip,
 For to fight 'em we could trust old Blue Billee!
Billy Blue, etc.

He was shavin' so they say,
 When he heard the news that day,
 And his Skipper came his wishes for to learn;
 But he only said "All right,
 Let 'em bark, for we can bite,
 For all they're like to try on us, I don't care a darn!"
Billy Blue, etc.

"No, I don't care a rap
 For any Frenchy chap,
 When they come they'll get the dressing they deserve;
 I've the best four in the fleet,
 That the Frenchmen well could meet,
 With the 'Fightin'' *Billy Ruff'n* 'in reserve.'
Billy Blue, etc.

"As she broke the line with Howe,
 So she's game to do it now,
 And repeat her 'First o' June' here in these seas;
 With their name for dauntless pluck,
 And the *Billy Ruff'n's* luck,
 I will fight as many Frenchmen as you please!"
Billy Blue, etc.

But it wasn't merely bluff,
For he saw the job was tough,
And the signal promptly flew to "Go about";
With the slowest ship in front,
And his own to bear the brunt—
So we headed back to England; guns run out.
Billy Blue, etc.

So the *Sov'ren's* lads he told
Like some hero chief of old,
As he bade them from the Quarter-deck "Good luck";
"To no foe upon the Sea,
You may take it, men, from me,
Is the ensign of the *Sov'ren* to be struck!"
Billy Blue, etc.

"Let the odds be what they will,
We must go on fighting still,
For the honour of the *Sov'ren's* old renown;
And when, men, all is done,
As we fire our last gun,
With our colours flying still, we'll go down!"
Billy Blue, etc.

[Admiral Cornwallis's actual words were "Remember, men, the *Sovereign's* flag and ensign are never to be struck to an enemy. She goes down with them flying."]

Soon we heard the "Branle-bas"
What cheers up the Frenchy tar,
And their "Vives for 'La Nation!' and 'La Patrie!'"
'Tis the way as you should know,
With the maritime crappo,
When he's got to do his fightin' on the sea.
Billy Blue, etc.

Then they came on looking slaughter,
Like to blow us from the water,
As they near'd to port and starboard and astern;
But we put in double shot,
And we paid 'em back so hot,
That they looked at one another in consarn.
Billy Blue, etc.

“ Just a broadside or two ?— ‘ Certainement,’
 For the honour of their flag ‘ cela s’entend,’
 But it’s more than very fine, seven ships to twenty-nine ?—
 Most decidedly ‘ no go,’
 Not at all ‘ comme il faut,’
 And a bit of British insolence for punishment condign ! ”
 Billy Blue, etc.

“ Just a broadside, if they like,
 Then forthwith her colours strike,
 Having rendered to their flag the homage due ;
 It’s sheer madness to pretend,
 They can fight us to the end—
 There’s no other course the Rosbifs can pursue ! ”
 Billy Blue, etc.

Next the *Triumph* they attacked,
 And the *Mars* got badly whacked,
 ’Twas the *Sov’reign* with her broadsides beat ’em back ;
 Her three tiers all aflame,
 Sweeping round the flag-ship came,
 Leaving death and Frenchmen’s wreckage in her track.
 Billy Blue, etc.

And they didn’t let us rest,
 For they did their level best,
 Fighting on and off from eight till after five ;
 Till at length they seemed to see,
 That it wasn’t going to be,
 That they wouldn’t take us dead nor yet alive.
 Billy Blue, etc.

How it ended is a story,
 Not at all to France’s glory,
 Of a little game the *Phæton’s* men did play ;
 Making Mossoo go in fear,
 That the Channel Fleet was near,
 And think perhaps he’d better run away.
 Billy Blue, etc.

For Blue Billy sent the *Phæton*,
When the pass looked like a straight one
To cruise out in the offing—just in sight ;
“ At a fitting time,” said he,
“ You will signal down to me,
That Lord Bridport will be with us before night.”
Billy Blue, etc.

“ You will fire guns, you know,
And to’ gallantsheets let go,
As the custom is, reporting fleets at sea ;
With a signal that they’re friends,
Which I think will serve our ends,
To humbug those chaps astarn with Monsieur V.”
Billy Blue, etc.

[“ Monsieur V.” was the familiar term for the French Admiral—Admiral Villaret-Joyeuse. The words of the last line are the actual words Cornwallis used.]

The Frenchmen cried “ Morblo’,”
And they shuffled to and fro,
Till they judg’d they’d haul their wind and go about ;
To Belleisle back all the way,
At anchor there to stay,
Till they learnt the coast was clear to venture out.
Billy Blue, etc.

Yet no Channel Fleet was near,
To excuse the Frenchmen’s fear,
For Lord Bridport was still cruising leagues afar ;
And a well-worn “ ruse de guerre ”
Was a hardy game to dare
With French frigates—seventeen—the plot to mar.
Billy Blue, etc.

It so happened, for the rest,
Just to point the *Phæton’s* jest
By the merest chance—it wasn’t meant at all—
Distant coasters passing by,
Chanced to fleck the evening sky,
And still faster to impel the flying Gaul.
Billy Blue, etc.

Here's to Stopford of the *Phaton*,
 And Flag-Captain Whitby bold,
 To Fitzgerald of the *Brunswick*, tried and true ;
 Gallant Gower of the *Triumph*,
 Gallant Cotton of the *Mars*,
 Lord Cranstoun—*Billy Ruff'n*—here's to you !
Billy Blue, etc.

Aye, Billy Blue : here's to him, with three times three,
 To the honour of his name upon the sea !
 " He upheld Old England's credit," said the country
in its pride.
 " Cornwallis's Retreat,"
 Great Xenophon's great feat
 In its spirit we may claim to set beside.
Billy Blue, etc.

E'en our foes, the Parley-Voos,
 At this feat of Billy Blue's
 Professed to be astounded—" Ètonnés "—
 " Hors de ligne " 'twas, so to speak,
 " Une affaire trop héroïque " ;
 " Le Déterminé," they call him to this day.
Billy Blue—
 Here's to you, Billy Blue, here's to you !

In June of this year Cornwallis was, in the ordinary way, promoted Vice-Admiral of the Red. Although he would accept nothing for himself, he took care that his recommendations for the promotion of officers who had served with conspicuous bravery on the occasion of his memorable retreat should not go unnoticed. Spencer wrote him on July 23rd, saying :—

" In compliance with your recommendation of those officers I have the satisfaction to acquaint you that the Board has appointed " etc., etc. Here follows the list of names.

The following amusing letter, written about this time by Cornwallis to the Admiralty, suggesting the transfer of a man who had served him faithfully, and whose position required regulating, is worth recording :—

SIR,—

I request that you will be pleased to state to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that George Jewson, a private Marine in the thirteenth Company of the Chatham Division, was embarked on board the *Crown* in 1788, and went with me to the East Indies. He was there removed into the *Minerva* and has since continued with me in the different ships where my flag has been. He has been constantly employed as a Writer. His figure, as well as the circumstance of his being exceedingly short sighted, has I believe prevented his having been trained as a Marine. He was formerly, I am informed, a Captain's Clerk ten years in the Service—which situation he might now have on board the *Royal Sovereign*, provided Their Lordships would be pleased to order his discharge from the Marine Corps. The present great want of proper persons to perform that necessary duty may perhaps incline Their Lordships to favor my request, which in this case would enable a Man to be paid for the service he performs, and I can with truth say, without being any loss to the Marines.

I have the honour to be, etc., etc.,

W. CORNWALLIS.

The request was complied with.

Cornwallis did not remain long at Cawsand Bay, sufficient only for the necessary repairs to his ships to be carried out at Plymouth. On July 6th he sailed again to join Bridport, and on July 22nd the force of French emigrants were landed at Quiberon, with the disastrous results already recounted.

About the middle of August, when there was a suggestion that Bridport should return home and leave Cornwallis in command, the former wrote to the Admiralty informing them of the dreadful ravages that scurvy was making amongst the ships' companies of the latter's squadron. He said:—

“ . . . In my last letter I thought the Squadron brought out by Vice-Admiral Cornwallis could have kept the Sea ten days or a fortnight longer than the ships that sailed with the *Royal George*, but their Lordships will see by Doctor Trotter's report, that the *Royal Sovereign* and *Invincible* have more scorbutic cases than I had reason to expect, and their Lordships will also perceive how much that Evil has increased since the last return I sent to

you ; and I own I am seriously alarmed at the rapid progress the Disease is making amongst us. . . . ”

On August 26th he again wrote :—

“ It appears from my judgement impossible for me to order Vice-Adm. Cornwallis to remain at sea. There are 787 cases of scurvy in his squadron.”

On September 2nd Cornwallis wrote to Bridport from the *Royal Sovereign* at sea :—

“ I beg leave to state to your Lordship that the men on board the *Royal Sovereign* were Scorbutic before we sailed from Spithead, the twenty sixth of May, since which time they have only had four days fresh meat, during the short time we were in Cawsand Bay. They have been since getting much worse, the lemon juice we got from the Hospital ship checked it a little, but that is now gone, and the Surgeon reports twenty eight fresh men to have come to him today. I think it my duty to state to your Lordship, for if they do not soon get refreshments, they will I am afraid be in a sad way.”

This appears to have decided Bridport, for on the following day he took the unprecedented step of informing the Admiralty that he intended to leave his station without awaiting orders to do so. The following is an extract from his letter :—

“ It becomes my indispensable duty to acquaint them [i.e. Their Lordships] that if no relief comes from England, it is my intention from necessity to quit this station with the whole squadron in the course of a week from this date, and whatever displeasure may arise from the measure, I must stand the consequences that may follow it.”

Bridport kept to his word, and he arrived with Cornwallis at Spithead on September 21st. The author could find no record of the fleet having been recalled by order. It is doubtful whether, even with the fairest wind both ways, it would have been possible for the Admiralty to have received this last letter and sent an answer back before the Commander-in-Chief sailed. Cornwallis went on leave on the 27th, and returned to duty on October 16th.

CHAPTER V

1795

IN the late summer of this year it had been decided to send a strong naval and military expedition to the West Indies. The situation in that part of the world had become serious and British prestige was on the wane. The French under Victor Hugues had obtained important successes, and had incited the blacks in British Colonies to revolt. The naval command was given to Rear-Admiral Christian [Hugh Cloberry Christian had fought alongside Cornwallis at Grenada and St. Kitts], the military to Sir Ralph Abercromby. Some weeks before the expedition sailed there occurred at Portsmouth certain events which shook naval discipline to its very foundation. It is referred to in the *Spencer Papers* as the "Naval Protest," but to call it a revolt of the Admirals and senior Captains of the Fleet is not far off the mark. In order to explain what led up to such a deplorable state of affairs it is necessary to go back to July of this year. A certain Lieutenant Fitzgerald of the 11th Foot was at that date in command of a detachment of his regiment serving as Marines on board one of the ships of the Mediterranean Fleet. He had committed some offence, and was remanded by the Captain of the ship in which he was serving for trial by a court-martial. The court was convened by Admiral Hotham, the Commander-in-Chief, and duly met to try the officer in question. Up to now both officers and men of Infantry Regiments serving as Marines on board one of H.M. Ships were treated as Marines and subject to naval laws and discipline: a state of affairs which caused much bad blood between the two Services. Sir John Moore, in his diary, states that feeling ran so high that duels had taken place between naval and military officers. Although brought up for trial, Fitzgerald, backed up, so he stated, by his own superior officers, refused to plead. The court convicted him and he was

sentenced to be dismissed the Service. Upon his arriving at Bastia, General Trigge, the officer commanding there, took the unprecedented step of ordering Fitzgerald to rejoin his regiment, thereby ignoring the sentence of the Naval Court. The sentence, however, was eventually confirmed by the King; whereupon Fitzgerald, still backed up by General Trigge, petitioned the Duke of York, the Commander-in-Chief, to have his case reopened, and for his trial by a military court-martial.

It was intended not only to transport troops on board the men-of-war, which were to form the fleet destined for the West Indian Expedition, but that detachments of Line regiments were, as usual, to be employed as Marines in them. This being the case the War Office took what they considered would be sufficient steps to prevent a repetition of the Fitzgerald affair. Under the signature of the Duke of York a memorandum was drawn up and sent to Abercromby. Christian was supplied with a copy, and he passed it on to Cornwallis. It is given in full :—

October 24th, 1795.

It having become absolutely necessary for the good of the Service in general that certain and precise Regulations should be formed, in Order to maintain in its full extent the authority of the Commanding Officers of His Majesty's Ships, in which Troops may be embarked: I am commanded to Acquaint You that His Majesty by virtue of the authority rested in him by the Mutiny Act has thought fit to establish and make an Additional Article of War (Copy of which is hereunto annexed), declaring that all Officers and Soldiers embarking in Ships of War shall immediately thereupon become subject to the Laws and Regulations established for the Government and Discipline of the said Ships, and shall consider themselves for these necessary purposes as under the Command of the Senior Officer of the particular Ship in which they are embarked, as well as of the Superior Officer of the Fleet (if any) to which the Ship belongs.

It appearing at the same time to be highly expedient that the Troops should know how to conduct themselves in Circumstances affecting their situation and discipline On board such ships, I have it further in command from His Majesty to give you the following Instructions which you will impart to the Senior Officer of each Detachment of the Troops under your

Command, embarked on board Ships of the description mentioned in the Articles of War.

1st. In case any Officer, non-Commissioned Officer, or Soldier, shall be guilty of any Offence against the Laws and Regulations established for the Government and Discipline of the Ship in which he is embarked, the Commanding Officer of such Ship by his own authority, and without reference to any other Person, is to Cause him to be put under arrest, or to confine him as a Close Prisoner if the Circumstances of the Case and the Naval Articles require it ; and to detain him (if necessary) in either of these Situations during his Continuance on board, transmitting without delay a report in writing of the charges against such Officer or Soldier to his Superior Officer or the Commander in Chief of the Land Forces, in order that he may be disembarked, or removed into some Transport the first convenient Opportunity, and then proceeded against according to Military Law, if the Offence charged be such as is cognizable by a General or Regimental Court Martial.

2nd. In Cases where the Practice of the Navy authorises immediate Punishment, Private Soldiers (but no others) are to suffer such Punishment as the Commanding Officer of the Ship may think fit to be inflicted, provided the Commanding Officer of the Troops shall previously concur in the necessity of such immediate Punishment, but if the latter differs in opinion thereupon (the reasons for which difference of Opinion he shall state in writing to the Commanding Officer of the Ship) the Delinquents are to be disembarked, or removed into a Transport and to be proceeded against As stated in the preceding Article.

3rd. The Military Court Martial whether General or Regimental cannot be held On board the said Ships Consistently with the Laws of the Navy.

4th. Should any Officer or Soldier while embarked Outward such Ships commit any Military Offence for which he would be amenable to a Court Martial if serving On shore, requisition is to be made by his Commanding Officer to the Commanding Officer of the Ship, who will thereupon cause such Officer or Soldier to be put under Arrest or Confinement, until he can be removed in the manner above mentioned and brought to Trial.

I am, Sir, Yours . . . etc., etc.,

FREDERICK, F.-M.

ADDITIONAL ARTICLE OF WAR.

Whenever any of our Forces shall be embarked on board Our Ships of War, or any other Ships which shall have been regularly commissioned by us, and which may be employed in the Transportation of our Troops, Our Will and Pleasure is, that the Officers and Soldiers of such Forces, from the time of embarkation On board any Ship As above described, shall strictly conform themselves to the Laws and Regulations established for the Government and Discipline of the said Ship, and shall consider themselves for these purposes as under the Command of the Senior Officer of the particular Ship, as well as Of the Superior Officer of the Fleet (if any) to which such Ship belongs.

It will be observed that, as regards the more serious offences, the Captain of a ship had only power to arrest and confine a person subject to military law, and even for minor offences he could only summarily punish with the consent of the offender's commanding officer. It is not astonishing then that naval officers of high rank should have rebelled at this extraordinarily high-handed action on the part of the War Office.

Cornwallis took an active part in protesting, and incurred the displeasure of the Admiralty, a fact which may have influenced Spencer against him when the following year he was tried by court-martial. The Duke of York's memo was sent to Christian from the Admiralty, but a letter from Spencer announcing what was intended arrived first. By this one is led to suppose that he (Spencer) had been overpersuaded by Dundas (who was Secretary of State for War) into believing that the action of the War Office was for the good of both Services. In this letter he states how the new regulations had been drawn up by and were the "deliberative opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown," and that he hoped they would "obviate any chance of a misunderstanding and point out a line of proceeding calculated to steer clear of those difficulties which the contradictory terms of the Acts of Parliament on this subject naturally create, and which have been the occasion of the awkward circumstances that have occurred on the Mediterranean Station."

The letter was a blow, but when the actual memo arrived it fell as a bombshell. Christian immediately wrote privately to Spencer, October 30th :—

In presuming to offer an opinion upon so important a Question as the One upon which I am about to treat, I trust to your Lordship's Judgments and the rectitude of the Principle which induces me to trouble you with this letter.

The Public Order which I received from the Board yesterday morning, together with transcripts of the Papers on which it is founded, appear to me to involve in them one of the most important points which can affect the Naval Service—the determination has been long expected, and in the suspension much conversation has been upon it in every Naval Society : It is with the greatest concern I state to your Lordship that the decision is not in any degree satisfactory to the Corps, and I particularly allude to those of the higher Rank. As yet, I have not conversed upon the subject with any but the Flag Officers ; feeling it much my duty to aid, and not to retard, such measures as the Admiralty must have considered with due weight. I now feel that I am greatly presuming, but in truth, my Lord, I apprehend such unpleasant Consequences that I consider it as justice to your Lordship to apprize you of them, and in so doing, if I may further presume to offer an Opinion, I think that if the proposed Regulations were to be confined to those embarked on board His Majesty's Ships for *Passage*, and *not as part* of the established Complement, all purposes might be answered and the approaching Storm averted. I think they might be extended to all Troops embarked upon any momentary pressure for Service for conveyance to any point of Attack, and indeed in all cases, except where they become a part of the efficient strength and Complement of the Ship.

I am writing this letter in the midst of interruption. I hope this will plead my excuse for any inaccuracy in the writing, and venture without hesitation to leave the motive which prompts me to write it entirely to your Lordship's consideration : and hope that it will only tend to prove the Respect and Esteem with which I have the honor to be, etc., etc.,

HUGH C. CHRISTIAN.

[*Spencer Papers.*]

Admiral W. Waldegrave [afterwards Lord Radstock], who was about to depart to take up a command in the Mediterranean, also wrote the following day to the First Lord :—

MY LORD,—

I trust that your lordship will do me the justice to believe me to be among the last of those in the service who could wish to give offence to you in any shape whatsoever ; and yet however unpleasant it may be to you to hear what I am now about to state, I should think myself highly culpable in every respect were I to remain silent.

I am extremely sorry to be under the disagreeable necessity of making known to your lordship that there appears to be a degree of fermentation in the mind of every naval officer here that may lead to even more than I dare venture to explain. To check this torrent has been impossible ; therefore all I have endeavour'd to do is to lead its course. The enclos'd will show your lordship the state in which the case now stands, and to-morrow we must see what is best to be done.

I think it proper to acquaint your lordship that hitherto I have not met two opinions on the subject in question, as we all feel convinced of the impossibility of carrying on the discipline of the service under the new regulations. If these therefore cannot be alter'd, it is the unanimous wish of the whole that the regular troops may be disembark'd from the fleet ; and by all that I have seen and heard, I am persuaded that there is not a man amongst us but who would prefer going to sea eighty short of complement to the receiving into his ship the most orderly and finest company of grenadiers under such painful and humiliating conditions.

Were my friend Lord Hugh Seymour here I am persuaded he would not hold a different language to that which necessity now compels me to address to your lordship. And now, my Lord, let me further tell you that if neither of the measures above pointed out can be acceded to by your Board, an address to Parliament on the subject will, I fear, be unavoidable ; and the ferment such a measure would create in this country at the present moment I think cannot be look'd to but with horror.

All we ask or hope for is that the troops serving on board the fleet as marines may be subject to the same discipline as heretofore and according to the present existing Act of Parliament

and the custom of the service. If this cannot be done, I will honestly tell your lordship that I consider our navy as ruined past redemption.

I have . . . etc., etc.,

WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE.

[*Spencer Papers.*]

Upon receipt of the Duke of York's memorandum a conference of Flag officers at Portsmouth was held. An endeavour to get Cornwallis to attend this was made by Waldegrave. The former was, however, weatherbound off St. Helens and wrote in answer to the invitation :—

I am extremely sorry to have received so very disagreeable a piece of intelligence as that which you have been so good as to communicate to me.

I shall if I can come on shore, but the weather is so uncertain, that it must depend a good deal upon it. I can however say that no man living feels more indignation than myself upon the subject, and that I shall be ready to join in any measure my Brother Officers may think proper to adopt upon this occasion.

I am, dear Waldegrave, yours most sincerely,

W. CORNWALLIS.

As he could not attend the conference all the necessary papers were sent to Cornwallis, with the following covering letter from Waldegrave :—

“I am this moment return'd from Sr. P. Parker's, where were present Admirals Pole, Curtis & Christian, who are, as well as myself, of opinion that the enclos'd papers shou'd be immediately laid before you in order that you may have leisure to form a just opinion on the Subject. It is our further wish that you will, if possible, meet us tomorrow at eleven o'clock at Sir P. Parker's, when Thompson & Bligh will also be present. I have only further to add that the minds of all the Captains & Officers of the Navy here on shore appear to be in that state of ferment that unless we take the lead in this business, the most serious consequences seem likely to ensue.”

The conference decided to make representations to their Commander-in-Chief, Earl Howe, who was still nominally in

command of the Channel Fleet. His letter, dated November 1st, is a model of diplomacy, and it reads :—

GENTLEMEN,—

I did not until yesterday receive all the papers referred to in the letter you have favoured me with of the 29th of last month ; the order to Rear-Admiral Christian (not material I apprehend to the purpose of your communication) excepted.

I was apprised that special regulations had been framed, as thought necessary on occasion of the supposed West-India expedition, before the receipt of your letter. But I did not sooner know they were issued or had been ultimately digested.

The opinions of the King's Advocate, Attorney-and Solicitor-Generals, transmitted to Sir Allan Gardner, perfectly correspond with the ideas I had ever entertained on the subject.

I understand the instructions Rear-Admiral Christian has received are such, as upon doubts suggested concerning the legal exercise of the authorities heretofore assumed on the construction of our naval laws prevalent in the like cases, were deemed at least exceptionable for the exigencies of the present moment : more especially as the so speedily expected departure of the armament would not probably allow time to have a more eligible provision established, in the extent the benefit of the King's general service requires.

As at present advised, I can therefore only express my confidence, that if the armament leaves this country before such more grateful expedient has been provided, the unquestionably prudent example of the two chief commanders may excite a similar emulation in the subordinates in each profession, to promote in their respective lines of duty, the benefit of the King's service, for the very important purpose of their present destination.

If Howe meant to damp the ardour of his disaffected subordinates he did not succeed ; for the conference again met on November 3rd, and drafted the following manifest which was sent to the Admiralty :—

SIR,—

Admiral S^r P. Parker has submitted to our perusal your letter of yesterday's date wherein you inform us by their Lord-

ship's Command in reply to our representation to their Lordships dated the 1st inst. "that the subject thereof is under consideration, & that their Lordships are *not without hopes some arrangement* may be made for removing in *some degree* the difficulties which appear to be felt on the occasion."

We feel it a duty to our King & our Country to represent to their Lordships our firm & decided opinion that no modification of the Statute by virtue of which his Majesty's ships, vessels & forces by sea is govern'd can be made, whereby the long establish'd authority of the Naval Officers may be diminish'd without involving the destruction of the Navy of this Country, & we are of opinion that notwithstanding the regulations which have been order'd to be carried into effect that by virtue of the Statute above recited, all officers & soldiery serving on board his Maj^{ty}s Ships are amenable to a naval Court-Martial: For we cannot imagine the Army regulations made by the Field Marshal his Royal Highness the Duke of York can have authority in the fleet, more especially when they are at variance with an Act of Parliament.

We beg leave to express some satisfaction at the orders receiv'd by S^r P. Parker, & which he has communicated to us for the disembarkation of troops in several ships & replacing them by marines.

We are, Sir,

Your most obed^t s^{ts},

P. PARKER

W^m. CORNWALLIS

CH^{AS}. THOMPSON

W^m. WALDEGRAVE

R. CURTIS

R. R. BLIGH

H. C. CHRISTIAN

CH^{AS}. M. POLE

Vice Adm^l W[aldegrave] signs for V. Ad^l C[ornwallis] at his request.

With Cornwallis's permission Waldegrave signed for him as he was still weatherbound. The latter wrote to him after the conference had dispersed, saying:—

"It was a sad disappointment to us all that you could not join us this day. I shall nevertheless sign for you as good a letter as our first; it is in answer to the most contemptible one that was ever penn'd. At least such was the opinion of all those that heard it read."

Whether the letter referred to as contemptible was Spencer's original to Christian, or Howe's letter to the Admirals, it is not possible to say, probably the latter.

Considering that the Admiralty, who were evidently alarmed at the situation created, were taking steps to replace Line detachments on board H.M. Ships by Marines, it is difficult to understand why the conference of Admirals should have sent so strongly worded a protest. They were evidently dissatisfied with half-measures and wanted troops carried as passengers in ships of war to be subservient to naval discipline as well as those who were more or less permanently on board. Probably at the bottom of the whole matter lay the fact that for some time past lay a smouldering fire, engendered by the natural wish of both Services to protect what they considered were their rights; rightly or wrongly, both considered they had a grievance. The fire had sprung into flame and it was difficult to quench.

Waldegrave had in the meanwhile received an answer to his first letter to Spencer, and writes to him again on November 4th :

“When your Lordship tells me that you ‘are far from being surprised at my writing with so much warmth on a subject which seems to be felt so strongly by all the profession,’ I cannot consider it but as a tacit acknowledgement of your approbation of my conduct on this momentous occasion. Believe me, my Lord, ’tis with the most sincere and heartfelt satisfaction that I see you approve of my mode of thinking, and acting on this most important question, and yet in truth, my Lord, it was as impossible that I shou’d have acted otherwise, so that your Lordship shou’d have thought differently on this subject.

“The circumspection which your Lordship says you are oblig’d to act with in this business I am thoroughly sensible of, it therefore cannot but be highly satisfactory to you to find your Board supported by such powerful Arms as the Officers of the Navy have now put into your hands; as I am as thoroughly persuaded that the Field Marshal will not venture to bring this matter before Parliament, as I am sure that, shou’d the Cabinet endeavour to force upon us the New Regulations, that there is not a respectable Officer in the Service but who will instantly decline serving. I have this moment had a long and most serious conversation with Admiral Cornwallis, and these, my Lord, are his sentiments, and likewise those of every other Flag

Officer here. As a corroboration of what I have just asserted respecting Admiral Cornwallis, I enclose a copy of his first letter to me on his receiving Copies of the duke of York's regulations, and the Board of Admiralty's Orders in consequence of them.

"Lieutenant General Abercrombie has behav'd in the most manly and sensible manner on this occasion, as he has not yet given out the new regulations, from a conviction (as I suppose) that the Navy will never submit to a code subversive of all sides and discipline, and which cannot but terminate in the destruction of this Country, were it possible to be adopted.

"The Question that now remains to be considered, my Lord, is, can these regulations be withdrawn or not from General Abercrombie's hands? If this cannot be done, with more pain than I can express do I say it, that the Navy of Great Britain is lost forever! 'Tis a measure that will not, cannot, admit of any modification whatsoever so long as the Statute for the Government of His Majesty's Ships, Vessels, and Forces by Sea remains. Shou'd this ever be done away by a new Act of Parliament, every Officer must be guided by his own feelings as to his future conduct, for as we have certainly more experience on our side on this subject than any other body of people, it must then remain with us to judge how far we may be capable of carrying on this Service with justice to our King and Country and honor to ourselves and the suppos'd new code that may be established.

"As to myself, my Lord, I have nothing to depend on but the Service, to abandon it would not only be sacrificing all my future hopes but my present comfort, and yet, my Lord, if the question is to be put to me, will I serve under such conditions as cannot but inevitably bring on the destruction of my Country? Your Lordship has, I trust, too high an opinion of me as a man of honor and rectitude to think that I can for one moment hesitate in my choice." [*Spencer Papers.*]

The letter he mentions as having received from Cornwallis has already been given.

Fortunately Abercromby realized the seriousness of the position and had not promulgated the Duke of York's order. It is also evident from this letter that Cornwallis only came ashore on November 4th for the first time since the row started. He was evidently more convinced than ever of the justice of the Navy's cause, for on the following day he wrote to the Admiralty

practically declining to serve unless the new regulations were withdrawn, although he had in the meantime received a communication from the Admiralty telling him that Line detachments on board ships of his squadron were to be replaced by Marines. His letter reads :—

SIR,—

I request that you will be pleased to state to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that I am conscious of having always been ready and desirous of serving in any station in His Majesty's navy, and with all deference and respect to my superiors. I do not, nor ever did object to the force put under my direction supposing the whole of those embarked subject to naval courts martial, but I beg leave to observe that without they are all alike amenable to naval discipline according to law, as it has been always hitherto understood, no good service can (in my opinion) be performed. Whilst, therefore, the late regulations made by Field-Marshal H.R.H. the Duke of York for soldiers embarked on board the King's ships continues in force, I feel myself (however painful) obliged to decline serving.

I beg leave further to remark that, if upon an emergency (such, for instance, as that which happened in the last winter, when the French fleet unexpectedly put to sea) there should not be a sufficient number of marines to complete the complement of the ships, it may, as was then the case, be thought necessary to embark soldiers who are now subject to the Duke of York's new regulations enforced by the Admiralty.

I therefore think it a duty to state my sentiments at present to their lordships that an officer zealous in the service of his country may not be put to the hard and cruel necessity of declining service when called upon to face the enemy.

For this he gets a severe rap over the knuckles, as the Admiralty reply through their Secretary, Mr. Nepean :—

SIR,—

Having communicated to My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter of the 5th instant, I am commanded by Their Lordships to acquaint you that the Instructions lately sent by Field Marshal His Royal Highness the Duke of York to Lieutenant General Sir Ralph Abercromby, and communicated by

Their Lordship's Order to Rear Admiral Christian, and Captain Bowen of the *Canada*, are not by Their Lordships understood as designed to extend to troops serving as Marines on board His Majesty's ships of War ; an explanation to this effect having been since transmitted to the Commanding Officer of the Land Forces destined to proceed to the West Indies, which, as soon as it is officially notified to their Lordships, will, in like manner, be communicated to the Commanding Officer of the ship to be employed on that service.

I have it further in command to acquaint you that Their Lordships could not help expressing their surprise that you should have thought it necessary to make the representation contained in your letter, at this time, when an order has been given obviously calculated to remove the possibility of any difficulty of the nature you allude to arising in the Squadron at present about to sail under your Command.

To this he answers :—

SIR,—

I had the honour of receiving your letter dated the seventh instant, in which you acquaint me that Their Lordships did not understand the Regulation extended to Troops, serving as Marines in the King's ships, and that Their Lordships were surprised that I should have written upon the subject, after the soldiers had been removed out of the ships under my command.

I first beg to be permitted to observe that the words of Their Lordship's order to Rear Admiral Christian was that " His Majesty's Troops under that article who may be *serving on board His Ships of War* "—there would not appear to anyone a doubt concerning the meaning of those words ; and in answer to that part of your letter in which you say Their Lordships express surprise at my having written upon the subject, after the Troops had been ordered to be disembarked, I confess if the Order could have admitted a doubt, I should have thought the disembarking the Troops was sufficient to confirm it, and I hope although I stated to Their Lordships freely and plainly my determination upon so important a point—yet I did it with all respect and humility, and being singly my own act, I hoped the motive for my having done so could not be misinterpreted.

On November 6th Waldegrave, who seems to have been the prime mover in the whole unfortunate business, wrote again to Cornwallis :—

“Were you here, I know not what we might be able to do, but it is the general opinion of the Flag Officers who have had the conducting of the business that we can proceed no farther at present. But I forget that you know not what has been done, I must now therefore tell you.

“In the first place the Admiralty have done nothing. Was ever such a weak and wretched system? for as the business now stands, they must be under the impression that we are determined not to obey the order of their Board respecting the Field Marshal’s Regulations. These however we have in part withdrawn, as that part of them is to stand which relates to land Officers and Soldiers going passengers only.

“I agree with you that the business in question is of a ‘Black and *infamous nature*, and certainly requires all our firmness and exertion,’ but really without your being here, we cannot get on a ship, and even were you among us I fear that we could not proceed farther for the present. I have written two strong private letters to shew that we don’t mean to let the matter drop where it now stands, and whenever it is reviv’d I trust you will find me worthy your esteem.

“What we have learnt concerning the alterations in the New Regulations is from Gen. Abercrombie; this is I believe a new mode of communicating important orders to the Navy. But nothing nowadays shou’d surprise us.”

Thus, for the time being, the serious position which had arisen between the two fighting Services of the nation ended in a compromise. How serious Spencer considered it is shown by the following extract of one of his letters to Sidney Smith, in which he says :—

“But I regret very much that the warmth of the officers should have driven it thus far, as they run a very great risk by having done so of shaking very fundamentally the whole of their discipline, which was established by practice as completely as they could wish, and which I am afraid cannot be as completely established by any legislative provision even if it should be found right to resort to that expedient.”

CHAPTER VI

1795-1796

CORNWALLIS sailed from St. Helen's with his squadron on November 10th. His special duty was to meet homeward East India-men and convoy them through the dangerous zone into safety. He was accompanied by Waldegrave, to whose squadron and convoy he afforded additional protection as far as the Straits of Gibraltar. He was also instructed to look into Cadiz, which port was even then being used more or less as an arsenal by France, although it was not until the following year that Spain allied herself with that country against the British. He arrived back at Spithead on December 19th, and reported to the Admiralty that the information he had gleaned at Cadiz was that "the French ships of war were unlikely to sail soon." In the meanwhile disaster had overtaken the expedition destined for the West Indies. "Christian had sailed on 16th November with 8 of the line and some 200 transports and West Indiamen, but on the 17th and 18th encountered a gale of extraordinary violence and was driven back, with his transports and convoy scattered and many of them lost. Over two hundred bodies were picked up between Portland and Bridport." [James's *Naval History*, vol. i, p. 281.]

Writing to Cornwallis on the subject, Sir Charles Saxton said :—

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,—

I should not have intruded upon My Lady's Riddles, nor writings—But to relate the unlucky tidings attending this long projected Expedition : I have just learnt That the *Alexander* Ordnance Storehip, Loaded with Field Pieces, Howitzers, Shot, Shells, and powder, is drove out of the Downes and has not since been heard of ; That the *Sisters*, another Ordnance Store-

ship with nearly the same kind of Loading, was run foul off and is now in Margate Pier with her sides stove in, and a *Third*, the *Young*—something, (I think the *Young Ceres*)—Loaded with Ordnance Stores also, for *the Sea service*, has lost all her Masts; this was just now related to me, by a Lieu^t Stewart, Commander of the first Mentioned Ship and happened somehow to be out of her, and just arrived from London. All this added to the *Prince George* being on shore upon the Warner so many hours must make confusion and disorder among the Chief Comm^{rs} on board that Ship; not to mention the unfortunate & untimely dispute between Adm^l Christian and Cap^t Schank, which (*I am told*) went to very indiscreet lengths (at this Moment) on the part of the Admiral, Who Collar'd Schank, and then parted with a Challenge from Schank, which they say the Adm^l Accepted & promised to fulfill at his return from the Expedition.

But the danger to be apprehended from his vehement & *untimely* warmth must make a strong impression & disadvantageous interpretation to so many Old experienced & wary commanders of what may be feared from such intemperance in future, and they are too knowing Veterans not to turn it to advantage & take it up upon every occurrence that *may* present itself, and I fear this combination of unpromising Events will go near to give the “*Coup de Grace*” to our hopes of the Expedition.

Adieu, dear Cornwallis, most affect^{ly},

C. S.

The expedition was reorganized, and Christian sailed again on December 9th. But the Fates were against him. Once more he “met with weather of exceptional severity. After struggling against it for two or three weeks his fleet was so much scattered and damaged that he was forced to return, and reached Portsmouth on 26th January, 1796.” [*Spencer Papers*, vol. i, p. 209.]

It was decided to reorganize what was left of this unfortunate expedition and to appoint Cornwallis as Commander-in-Chief, with Christian as his second in command. Abercromby was still to remain in command of the land force.

Cornwallis was not unmindful of what had happened the previous November, and was desirous of knowing exactly how matters stood as regards the disciplinary powers of naval officers over soldiers on board a man-of-war. He was on leave in

February of this year, and wrote to Spencer on the 3rd from his brother's house in Wimpole Street :—

“I am sensible of your lordship's obliging attention to me, and particularly in having named me to command abroad.

“There is however one very material point which I wish much to have explained. I should, I am sure, be very sorry if my mentioning it could give your lordship a moment's uneasiness.

“With submission to your lordship, after what was agitated some time since, concerning land forces not being subject to the naval articles of war when embarked on board His Majesty's ships—should it not be understood from authority to remain as hitherto conceived to be established by law in His Majesty's naval service ?”

He wrote again on the 8th, but appears to have interviewed Spencer in the meanwhile :—

MY LORD,—

Conceiving from what fell from your lordship the last time I had the honour of attending you, that it is not impossible but that I may be sent away suddenly.

I beg therefore to state to your lordship that when Lord Hugh Seymour did me the honour to call and mention your lordship's obliging intention as to me, he said there were to be eight or ten good 74-gun ships to be employed upon the most active service, and commanded accordingly for the protection of the Leeward Islands, and that Rear-Admiral Pole (of whom I have the best opinion) was to be second. The only ships I have heard of all those mention'd by your lordship I am afraid are not exactly of Lord Hugh Seymour's description. One of the captains I do not recollect to have ever seen, and the other I am not at all acquainted with, but I rather doubt his lordship's making choice of either of them, if he was going out upon an active cruise.

I never did, my lord, express a desire to go to the Leeward Islands, considering from the number of them and jarring interests, that it was always a station where an officer, instead of gaining credit, was more likely to lose any little reputation he might have acquired. I hardly know an instance where it has happen'd otherwise except in the case of Lord Rodney, and that

only the last time he was there; but he was particularly a fortunate man. . . .

I will not again trouble your lordship by mentioning the unpleasant situation the late regulations of the army have put the officers of the navy into, as your lordship seem'd to be of opinion it was proper that something should be done to content minds upon that head.

Spencer did not reply to this letter until the 24th, when he wrote :—

“If I had not received your letter of yesterday I proposed to have written a line or two to you to-day on the subject of the regulation relative to troops on board ship, which was given out by Admiral Christian. I understand that Sir Ralph Abercromby never has officially issued it to the army under his command, and I am well assured that, in consideration of the great difficulty which seems to exist in the question as between the two services, he will not issue it. It will therefore not be considered in force, and though an official notification to this effect is not made to you, I can take upon myself in this manner to authorise you to act as if no such regulation had been issued. At the same time intreating you most earnestly on account of the extreme delicacy of the case to use every means in your power when on your command to prevent any question arising which may involve the two services on this subject. I do this in the fullest reliance that you will find amongst all the officers of every description employed abroad the best disposition to prevent any such questions from giving impediment to His Majesty's service; and more especially with respect to Sir Ralph Abercromby himself, I am quite sure from his former temper and moderation in this business that he will coincide with you in preventing any such disagreeable discussions from taking place.”

Cornwallis was still dissatisfied, and wrote a strongly worded letter to the First Lord :—

MY LORD,—

I have been honour'd with your lordship's letter which came by the express this morning. I am aware my lord of the extreme danger in agitating a point of this delicate nature at this moment.

I had however no conception of its standing as it now appears to do by the letter which your lordship has honour'd me with, by which the new regulations appear to be in force, at least at the will of the commander-in-chief of the land forces for the time being. Surely they might have been recalled from Sir Ralph Abercromby, who, it seems, has not officially communicated them. I have as high an opinion of him as any person can have of another whom he has never seen, particularly for the moderation which he has shown upon this occasion, but I understand that he may soon return from the West Indies. If not, service or the climate may occasion the command to fall into a variety of hands, who, instead of the moderation and love of his country which I am convinced Sir Ralph Abercromby possesses, may perhaps show as little of it as General Trigge by his conduct appear'd to do.

I confess to your lordship if I had been informed in what way this very important point stood, as well as some other matters which do not appear exactly in the way I was led to believe, I should most certainly have requested to be permitted to decline the honour which your lordship has so obligingly done me. And I do now most sincerely desire that I may be allowed to relinquish it.

Your lordship may depend upon it that I never will mention one word upon the subject of the troops, which I have carefully avoided since I have been here, and as I never have shown or indeed felt any particular pleasure in going upon this service my not going will not occasion any surprise, or the topic to be canvassed, which every friend to the country must most sincerely lament was ever brought forward. I feel, my lord, very much the situation which I am unhappily in, and I trust to your lordship's goodness that you will not take amiss my earnest request to your lordship to release me from it.

In the original draft of this letter, which is among the Admiral's papers, the words "of the troops" are omitted. They make all the difference to the context, as otherwise the subject he referred to might be taken to mean the question of his asking to be relieved of the position to which he had been appointed. In view of subsequent events it should be borne in mind that he *did* ask to be relieved. It is certain that Cornwallis's attitude

irritated Spencer; this is shown in his reply, for, writing on February 25th, he said :—

DEAR SIR,—

I have only time to write a few words by the messenger who is now going to Portsmouth in answer to your letter of this morning.

The regulations in question are certainly not in force as they have not been officially promulgated by Sir Ralph Abercromby, who is the only land officer who has received them, and not having been officially communicated to you, you are not bound to take notice of them.

It is not possible for me to say more on the subject, but I am persuaded that if proper care is taken to prevent the discussion of the question the regulations cannot be produced by any other officer, as they have been issued to none but Sir Ralph Abercromby.

I am at a loss to know what other matters you allude to which do not appear to be exactly as you expected. The only point I remember on which you seemed to lay much stress was that of the marines, and in consequence of your representation twenty additional marines have been ordered for the *Royal Sovereign*; I am not at all aware that you can have any other wish which I have not done everything in my power to gratify, and I can only add that I should feel myself very deficient indeed in the duty I owe to the public, if I could for a moment listen to an intimation of your declining to undertake this service on which you are so urgently called to proceed without a moment's loss of time. There never was a moment in which the speedy departure of any fleet was of more essential importance to this country; and the Board of Admiralty, in confiding the execution of that service to you, have testified in the most satisfactory manner their opinion of the estimation in which you are held both in the service and with the public.

Cornwallis's answer to this was an endeavour to smooth the ruffled feelings of the First Lord. He wrote :—

MY LORD,—

I have had the honour of receiving your lordship's two letters, one expressing strongly a wish that we might sail to-

morrow morning at furthest. I beg leave to observe that last night I had received no intimation that there was any hurry to send me out. The *Royal Sovereign's* pay would be due the First of March ; this has been regularly reported, and Captain Whitby had written to the Navy Board, in consequence of which the books are now in the office. I have been with the commissioner and he has at last agreed to pay the ship (tho' not in course) early to-morrow morning. It should have been done to-night if the books had been cast up at the office. I will not wait one moment after, but I think your lordship will approve of my not attempting to go abroad with the payment within three days of its becoming due, and thereby occasion a discontent in the men which indeed under the circumstances might well be expected and is so very hurtful to the service.

In regard to the other matter, as it is determined, there can be no use in my troubling your lordship again upon the subject. You may depend upon my utmost care to prevent any disagreement between the two services, when harmony is so necessary, and I do assure your lordship that anything I may have said did not proceed from an idea that you did not wish to do what was civil and kind to me, and I am certain that your lordship did accept the high office which you hold for no other purpose but that of rendering at this critical time the best service in your power to the country in which I most sincerely wish you success.

It may be as well to mention that, although it was none of his business, General Abercromby had protested against the naval command being given to Cornwallis. Probably his reason for so doing was that he realized how strongly Cornwallis had opposed the Duke of York's memo. Writing to Pitt on this point, Spencer said :—

“I have taken the liberty of troubling you with these details which more regularly belong to me to arrange, because I had an intimation that Sir Ralph Abercromby had objections to Cornwallis going. In a former instance I went a great way in consulting Sir Ralph's wishes respecting the naval command of the expedition (tho' I allow that there were other good reasons for deciding as I did), but where there are such strong grounds in my mind, of which Sir Ralph cannot be apprised (and with which if he were he has no business) to urge me to appoint a

particular officer to a situation adapted to his rank in the service, I cannot allow his wishes to have much influence on the decision, however desirous I naturally must feel that everything should go on as smoothly as possible." [*Spencer Papers*, vol. i.]

Cornwallis sailed on February 29th; but for the third time the expedition was fated to meet with ill fortune.

CHAPTER VII

1796

PROCEEDING down the Channel with his squadron and a large convoy, Cornwallis met with heavy weather. During the gale the *Royal Sovereign* was in collision with the *Belisarius*, one of the transports. The former was damaged to such an extent that Cornwallis deemed it advisable, after seeing his convoy as far as west of Cape Finisterre, to return to Portsmouth. He handed over the command temporarily to the next senior officer, his intention being to proceed to his station as soon as the necessary repairs had been effected to his flag-ship. He arrived at Spithead on March 14th and immediately informed the Admiralty of the misfortune which had befallen him. The Board were displeased at his returning, for on the following day they wrote expressing the great regret they felt at his returning into port, after getting so far to the Southward, and suggesting that he should have shifted his flag to one of the other ships of his squadron, and pointing out that his presence in the West Indies was essentially necessary. The last paragraph of their letter reads :—

“Under the present circumstances their Lordships judge it expedient that you should hoist your flag and proceed to Barbadoes on board the *Astrea*, taking with you your Secretary and Flag-Lieutenant.”

By the same post Spencer wrote privately to him, saying much the same as the Admiralty's official letter, except that he rather tried to whitewash the Admiral's conduct while evidently disapproving of it, for he said :—

“I conclude you had very satisfactory reasons for not shifting your flag, when you found it necessary for the *Royal Sovereign* to return to Spithead ; and after she had sustained so much blowing weather subsequent to the accident, I suppose the damage occasioned by it must have increased so as to make her further proceeding improper.”

Spencer also wrote a short official letter on the same day apprising Cornwallis that he had been made Rear-Admiral of Great Britain. The *Astrea* was a small frigate. Cornwallis was not in a good state of health and objected to making this long voyage under such conditions. He replied to the Admiralty on March 16th :—

SIR,—

I had the honor of receiving your letter of yesterday's date, and an Order from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for me to hoist my flag on board the *Astrea* Frigate, and proceed without loss of time to Barbadoes.

I beg of you, Sir, to assure Their Lordships that I am extremely sorry to find that they do not approve of my returning into port in the *Royal Sovereign*. I was not vain enough to imagine my immediate presence in the West Indies was of so much importance as Their Lordships are pleased to do me the honour to suppose—particularly as there is an officer there of a higher rank than myself, who probably, or for anything I am acquainted with, might have staid some time after my arrival. I did not shift my Flag on board the *Mars* or *Minotaur*, because I was not willing to meddle more with those ships than was absolutely necessary, conceiving it to be 'Their Lordships' inclination—as they had not given me the smallest intimation concerning them.

I beg, Sir, that you will be pleased to state to Their Lordships' my readiness to proceed in the *Royal Sovereign* the moment her defects are made good—if that should meet with Their Lordships approbation. But the very precarious state of my health obliges me to decline going out in a small Frigate, a stranger to every person on board, without accommodation or any comfort whatever.

On the same day he wrote privately to the First Lord in answer to his letter :—

MY LORD,—

I have had the honour of receiving your lordship's two letters.

It gives me much concern to find by one of them that your

lordship seems to think that I ought to have gone on. If I had only considered my own conscience, without regarding the state of the ship and the damage she was likely to receive by worms, &c., I certainly might have tried it. The *Minotaur* was not I believe fit to stay in the West Indies, and the taking Sir Charles Cotton's ship from him would have been very distressing; the shifting everything from one ship to another at sea is not always very easy to be done. The communication which I was obliged to have with the *Minotaur* was begun in a calm, but it blew very fresh before it was finish'd, and I was very glad to get my boats back.

I really, my lord, am not able to go out in the frigate, at which I hope you will not be displeased.

I feel myself very much obliged to your lordship for what you are pleas'd to communicate in the other letter which you honour'd me with that a patent was order'd to be made out appointing me Rear-Admiral of Great Britain, for which favour I am entirely obliged to your lordship.

The next communication from the Admiralty was to the effect that they noted his remarks and requested him to continue to fly his flag on the *Royal Sovereign* until further orders. Spencer, however, wrote very strongly at the same time :—

SIR,—

If the Board had not deemed your speedy arrival in the West Indies of material importance to his Majesty's service, they would certainly not have thought of ordering you out in a frigate, a mode of conveyance exactly the same as that in which Sir John Laforey went out to the same station. Your declining therefore to go out in that manner can only be considered by them as indicating your determination to relinquish the appointment altogether, and I am very sorry to be obliged to say that under the circumstances of your case such a determination puts it out of my power to continue you in employment without giving what I conceive would be a very dangerous example to the service, and entirely subverting every idea of the discipline so necessary to be maintained in it.

To this Cornwallis replied :—

MY LORD,—

I must beg leave to observe in answer to the letter which I had the honour of receiving from your lordship this morning, that the frigate was fitted out for Sir John Laforey and his son appointed captain. He had besides some establishment when he got upon the station. If I had gone out in the *Astrea* I must have continued on board that ship, or gone on board another under the same disadvantages. If Sir John Laforey had left me, I do not know that I could (so circumstanced) have performed my duty. I confess I thought it must have appear'd in that light to the Admiralty Board, and that the *Astrea* was order'd more to show disapprobation than from any serious intention that I should have gone out in that manner. The accident which has befallen the *Royal Sovereign* has been very distressing to me.

I hope your lordship will excuse my having taken up so much of your time, but I thought it necessary to indicate the motives for my conduct, which it gives me great concern to find are misunderstood by your lordship.

Two days later the Admiral received from the Admiralty the astonishing intelligence that it had been decided to try him by court-martial. He at once wrote to the Board's Secretary :—

SIR,—

I have received your letter of yesterday's date, informing me that you are commanded by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint me that it is 'Their Lordships' intention to order a Court Martial as soon as the same can be conveniently assembled, for the purpose of enquiring into my conduct in not repairing to the West Indies agreeable to the orders I had received from Their Lordships upon that head.

In answer to which I beg to observe, for 'Their Lordships' information, that I believe there never was an instance where an officer of any kind had been brought to a Court Martial for stating in a respectful manner that he was obliged, on account of his health, to decline going out by a conveyance totally contrary to his expectation, with the additional inconvenience (to an officer not in a good state of health), that there was no proper

ship for him to go on board when he arrived upon the station, and in justice to myself I think it right to add, that if it had ever been intended to proceed to such a length against me, it would have had a better appearance at least if no private letters had been sent to me upon the subject from any members of the Admiralty Board.

It seemed incredible that a man with Cornwallis's record should be tried by court-martial, and his friends had naturally become alarmed on his behalf. Sir Charles Saxton wrote from Bath :—

“I am too much alarmed to write you now about nonsense. Therefore I have to be short—I have transcribed verbatim a Letter I rec^d this morning addressed to me at Portsmouth from Lord Hood dated the 21st Ins^t, who speaks so positively upon the subject, that I cannot forbear being agitated about it, persuaded However ! that you will impartially weigh every minute circumstance of Conduct and be well advised before you will permit them any advantage that they may promise themselves from such an Issue. I have left off drinking the Waters and purpose being at Portsmouth some time in the first week in April.”

Hood's letter to which he refers said :—

MY DEAR SAXTON,—

I am this moment informed to my very great surprize & Concern that our friend Admiral Cornwallis is to be tried by a Court Martial and one charge is, I hear, disobedience of Orders in not proceeding to the W^t Indies in the *Astrea*, but I know not how to give it credit. The good Bishop is extremely distressed, pray tell me all you know of the unlucky business ! Lord Howe is to preside at the Court Martial, which is soon to take place. Remember me kindly to the Admiral.

Cornwallis wrote again to the Admiralty on the 22nd hoping that their Lordships “will be pleased to order all Flag officers whose flags are flying and can be assembled to sit as members of the Court Martial,” and in the same letter requested permission “to retire from Portsmouth on account of my health,” adding

that their Lordships could rest assured of his attendance when called upon.

He does not appear to have received any answer to either this letter or to that of the 19th, for on the 27th he again wrote complaining bitterly of his treatment :—

SIR,—

In answer to your letter of the nineteenth instant, acquainting me that it was 'Their Lordships' intention to order me to be tried by a Court Martial for not having repaired to the West Indies according to their orders, I stated for the reason therein expressed, that I conceived it a hardship to be brought to trial upon that account, since which I have not received from you by 'Their Lordships' order any further information upon the subject.

My state of health is not so much improved by the treatment I have lately received, and appears better suited for retirement than any immediate service at sea. If, therefore, 'Their Lordships' are still inclined to try me by a Court Martial, I hope they will be pleased to proceed in it, and not keep me any longer in my present unhappy situation, held up as a culprit subject to the abuse of the public prints.

I have not been out of the ship since I received your letter informing me of 'Their Lordships' intention, and have not therefore profitted by 'Their Lordships' indulgence (as you were pleased to term it) in answer to my application for leave of absence which was only made with a view to prevent my being called upon duty incident to the Port, and thereby mix, and be liable to converse with, those whom by your letter were likely to be my judges.

He wrote again on April 1st :—

SIR,—

I request that you will be pleased to state to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that as they did not seem to think it necessary to call the flag-officers from the different ports to sit at my court martial, I hope (if their lordships are still inclined to try me), that they will be pleased to bring it on before the flag-officers depart, who are, I understand, preparing to sail.

The trial is of a nature which does not require much evidence, and therefore as it cannot run out to any great length, or consequently retard the public service, I should hope their lordships will not find it necessary upon that account to deprive me of as many flag-officers as can legally be assembled in a case of this kind, which so materially concerns the situation of that rank of officers when offering to serve their country.

I beg further to state to their lordships that I am not conscious of ever having acted in my public capacity with any view but that of forwarding his Majesty's service in the best manner I was able. I am far from supposing that my judgment is always right, and I have been particularly sorry to find (as I expressed myself in a former letter), that their lordships were not pleased with my conduct upon the present occasion. I have never expressed a desire to have it inquired into at a court martial, but from a variety of circumstances attending my case, the public investigation of such a matter might be hurtful at this moment to the public service, and I am perfectly ready to sacrifice my feelings upon their lordships' disapprobation having been made so publicly known, trusting to my general character in a pretty constant service and of some duration.

I really was much surprised when I received your letter acquainting me it was their lordships' intention to order me to be tried at a court martial, as I had the post before received a letter from very high authority at the Board, saying that from any determination (which their lordships very erroneously concluded me to have taken) of relinquishing the appointment altogether, the consequence would be that I should not be continued in employment.

This last brings from the Admiralty the definite intelligence that the court has been convened for the 4th, and that Earl Howe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, is to be the president. Mr. Nepean wrote on the 2nd :—

SIR,—

I have received and communicated to my lords Commissioners of the Admiralty your letter to me of yesterday's date, expressing your desire, in case their lordships should think fit to order you to be tried by a court martial, that such court may be

ordered to assemble before the flag-officers depart, who you understand are preparing to sail, in order that you may not be deprived of as many officers of that rank as can legally sit at the said court martial; and I have their lordships' command to acquaint you that they have already ordered the Earl Howe, admiral and commander-in-chief of the fleet, to assemble a court martial on Monday the 4th instant, or as soon after that time as can conveniently be done for your trial; and that they are equally desirous with you that a court as respectable as possible should be assembled on this occasion, but that circumstances may possibly occur which may render the sailing of one or more of the flag-officers from Portsmouth before the court can be assembled, a measure of necessity; notwithstanding which there will then remain at Portsmouth a greater number of flag-officers than has ever sat upon the trial of a flag-officer.

In connection with the Admiral's court-martial it is interesting to observe that the Government of the day were evidently anxious as to what political advantage might be gained from it by the Opposition. Cornwallis's exploit of the previous year was still fresh in the minds of all thinking people, and his popularity was undoubted. On April 1st, Thomas Grenville wrote to Lord Spencer:—

“In reflecting upon the advantages which Opposition will try to make of what has passed respecting Admiral Cornwallis, it seems highly probable that Lord Lansdowne's desultory speech upon the state of the nation will include in it some reference to that transaction, and if so I take for granted you would not choose to be absent when any such mention is made. I found Lord G(renville) quite as anxious as I could be both for your having legal assistance as to wording the charges, and also for the most speedy conclusion of the trial. Upon this last subject I hear from General Ross, whom I have just seen, that the Admiral has written to the Board to press them for an early trial, and therefore I conclude you will no longer have any delicacy in giving to the business all the expedition which you can. Ross assures me that Lord C[ornwallis]'s opinions and sentiments continue such as you left them, and that Lord C[ornwallis] has written a letter to the Admiral in which he expresses a perfect conviction that your conduct to the admiral has always been full of regard

and attention to him. In that letter Lord C[ornwallis] refers to the opinion he had before given his brother as to the main subject, and advises him to come to town, and offers him any such assistance by his advice as it is possible for him to afford. The Admiral, however, has declined coming to town, is confident as to the event of his trial, and is impatient for it in order 'to prevent officers of his rank and station being hereafter liable to be so insulted.' As far as I can make out I imagine that the admiral is not inclined to impute any hostile motives to you, but considers the other members of the Admiralty Board as inimical to him." [*Dropmore Papers.*]

CHAPTER VIII

1796

THE court eventually assembled on board the *Orion*. Earl Howe was president, and with him sat Admirals Sir Peter Parker, Bridport, Vandepest, Gardner, Colpoys, Curtis, Harvey, Bligh and Pole, as well as three Post-Captains.

Barrow, in his life of Howe, suggests that the Earl had already prejudged the case, for he says :—

Lord Howe regretted very much that the Admiralty should have thought it necessary to take this step, having a very high opinion of Cornwallis's character, and being an ardent admirer of the gallant encounter which, in the preceding year, his little squadron of five sail of the line and two frigates had with a French fleet of thirteen line-of-battle ships and fourteen frigates. "Not having," he says, "yet seen the charge, I cannot form any opinion as to the mode of proceeding. The order for the Admiral to put to sea immediately in the frigate implies a dereliction of the strong ground for disapprobation—'the not proceeding in one of the line-of-battle ships under his orders.' If, on the other side, a refusal to embark in the frigate, after he was so directed, is the basis of the charge, it seems at present to me that his letter to the Board, in which the refusal is expressed, contains all the requisite proofs thereof."

Cornwallis was defended by the Hon. Thomas Erskine, who afterwards became Lord Chancellor. The charges, three in number, were : (1) For returning to Spithead without orders ; (2) For not shifting his flag to another ship after the accident to his own ; (3) For not proceeding in the *Astrea* as ordered to. His statement in defence of these charges was presumably prepared by his Counsel. It is admirably constructed and worthy of being given in full :—

DEFENCE TO THE FIRST CHARGE.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN OF THE COURT MARTIAL,—

I am brought before you, after a long course of uninterrupted Service, to answer charges which, if they be well founded, would at once deprive me of the comfort I have enjoyed in the reflection of having assiduously and zealously, if not successfully, devoted my whole life to the duties of my profession and the Service of my country.

I am accused (for I can put no other interpretation upon the charges) either with having betrayed an important trust, or having by misconduct rendered it abortive; and with having unprofessionally denied my service when it was called for by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. I cannot, therefore, but be deeply anxious to engage your attention to my defence, in which I will lay before you, without reserve or management, all the motives of my conduct, submitting them, with perfect confidence, to your impartial determination. My anxiety that the defence which I have thus humbly to lay before you should be very distinctly understood is greatly increased by the regard I must feel for the dignity and independence of the Navy.

If my honour can be wounded by the means which are employed to destroy it, the honour of those to whom I am addressing myself, whose characters are the highest part of this nation's inheritance, and the best security for her glory, may by the same means be also tarnished and destroyed.

On the 10th of February I received the commission recited in the warrant, under whose authority the Court is assembled. At the time when I accepted this command, my health was so impaired and broken, that had I felt a disposition (which I hope I have never manifested) to shrink from any station, however distant, inconvenient or hazardous, I might have avoided it altogether, without departing from the rules and customs of the service, and without any possible hazard to my reputation; since it has not been usual to press upon officers superior commands, which are honourable and profitable, and for which there are always many willing and deserving competitors. The station, therefore, was certainly not imposed upon me by authority, but voluntarily assumed from an earnest desire to render any service to the public which I might be thought capable of performing.

At this time the situation of the West Indies was undoubtedly highly critical ; it had become so from the almost unexampled inclemency of the autumn and winter, which had for months together disappointed every effort to transport a large force across the Atlantic for their security ; a conjuncture which rendered it the natural and obvious object of Government to seize the first favourable change in the wind, then beginning to turn to the eastward, in order to dispatch under a respectable convoy a large body of transports, which by various accidents had been so long prevented from sailing. This I considered as the primary object of the service allotted to me. My personal presence in the West Indies (further than it was comprehended in the performance of that immediate service) appeared to me to be secondary. The urgency of it was not particularly pointed out in my instructions, which were general, and not accompanied with any communication which led me to consider that I was immediately to assume the chief command in the West Indies, for the purpose of undertaking any immediate service, in which a special reliance was to be placed upon my humble ability to serve the public. On the contrary, in the different communications which I had with the First Lord of the Admiralty, even after I had received my commission, I never distinctly collected that Sir John Laforey was to immediately deliver up the command on my arrival ; and I carried with me no specific order to him on that subject ; nor was a syllable ever said to me either upon the nature of the service expected from me in the West Indies, or the particular urgency of my personal presence in those parts, till after my return into port ; on the contrary, I had every reason to imagine my sailing at last was hurried for the precise object of conducting that part of the convoy which the *Vengeance* had left behind ; and surely the putting the convoy originally under the charge of the *Vengeance*, leaving me behind at Spithead, did not at all manifest the urgency of my immediate presence in the West Indies, except for the purpose of attending the convoy.

Under these circumstances, and in the condition of the West Indies, as it had long pressed itself upon the mind of every man interested in the prosperity of Great Britain, it would have been a presumptuous judgment in me to have put upon a footing my personal exertions in the West Indies, with the arrival of that

necessary force which in the first instance I was to forward and protect.

Strongly impressed with these considerations, I kept the dispatch of the convoy uppermost in my mind, as the first object to be attended to.

I was the more confirmed in this conception of my duty by a letter I received from the First Lord of the Admiralty, dated the 25th of February, in which his Lordship stated, that as Captain Russel, of the *Vengeance*, notwithstanding the order he had received, had proceeded to sea without taking the transports and victuallers under his convoy, I was to give them instructions, take them under my protection, and his Lordship added a strong wish that I should seize the opportunity of the wind then favourable, and proceed to sea with all possible dispatch. I received this letter on the next day (Friday) the 26th February : at this time I had to give instructions to upwards of a hundred sail of ships : the *Royal Sovereign* was within a few days of the pay becoming due to the ship's company : Capt. Whitby had taken the precaution to have the books down, and I went immediately to the commissioner to press the coming off that day, if possible, to pay the ship, which he agreed to do, on my producing the letter, though they were not regularly entitled to it : the books not being cast, it was too late that day : but he came off the next morning, at which time the ship had been unmoored to be ready to sail, if the payment could have been made the day before.

About 200 landmen and marines, destined for the West Indies, were besides received at the same time, to be distributed amongst the ships on that station. The commissioner did not leave the ship till between four and five in the afternoon of Saturday, which was too late to move at that season of the year ; but I made the signal to weigh early the next morning, and actually sailed accordingly, although the ship was short of beer entirely, and of water very considerably ; and I pushed out, inconvenienced and hurried as I was, for the purpose of getting out the convoy, confident that the ships under my protection would not have moved, but from my example. I mention these circumstances, as they serve to show that I was not very backward in obeying my orders to repair to the West Indies ; as all this was done in consequence of a letter from the First Lord, and I did not receive my sailing orders till late on the day before I sailed.

On Monday night about ten o'clock, the convoy then being collected, the *Belisarius* ran on board the *Royal Sovereign*, and continued entangled with her near an hour. At that time it was too dark, and blew too hard to hold any communication with the other ships; and it was besides impossible in the instant to ascertain the extent or the possible consequences of the accident. The *Undaunted* and *Beaver* parted company in the course of that night. During the following day it also blew too hard for communication with the squadron, or inspection of the ship; and in the night of that day the *Alfred* and *Quebec* parted company also.

During this time, though I felt great anxiety on the subject of the ship, and could have wished to examine her condition at Plymouth before I left the Channel, yet as she did not leak, and as the convoy was too much dispersed to have received any orders, and must have become totally separated, and at all events greatly delayed by such an attempt, I thought it most consistent with my duty, and with the spirit of my instructions, to pursue the tract of the voyage, so as to push forward the convoy through the most dangerous part of the navigation, and to take the first opportunity of moderate weather to inspect the condition of the ship, and to act accordingly.

On the 5th of March, when the weather was for the first time sufficiently moderate, I went into a boat to examine the consequences of the accident, when it evidently appeared that she could neither lay with security at her anchors, nor keep the sea with safety. Would it therefore have been justifiable in me, for motives of my own accommodation, to have proceeded to the West Indies in that ship, knowing that when she got there she was unfit for immediate service, and well aware of the delays and inconveniences which must have been incurred during the repairs of so serious an accident?

Had my own convenience been my principal object, I certainly should have attempted it; but on considering that on my arrival in that country, should the command be committed to me, there was no proper ship selected for me to go into; and knowing the *Royal Sovereign* to be unfit for present service, and not repairable at all there, as appears by the builder's evidence, I should have felt it criminal to have deprived the country of the services of a ship, which by the repair in England might have been so soon rendered effective, and been dispatched to the West

Indies long before she could have been refitted in that country, and probably in time to contribute to any operations which could proceed from the arrival of the convoy. I therefore examined the charts with a view of recollecting some harbour in the course of the voyage where a repair might be reasonably attempted, but no sufficient one presenting itself, I judged it to be the most consistent with my duty and with the spirit of my instructions, to take the advantage of the light easterly wind which then favoured us, still to carry on the convoy to the southward and westward, and then to return to England.

On the 7th of March, this object being accomplished, I accordingly made the signal for Captain Louis, and delivered over the convoy to his charge, which I had just time to do, when it came on to blow hard as before. It is imputed to me as blame that I did not shift my flag into another ship; but it must be remembered, in the first place, that all the squadron under my own particular command, and which were alone destined for the West Indies, had parted company long before it was possible to make that arrangement.

The *Alfred*, *Undaunted*, *Prompt* and *Beaver* were the only ships put by the Admiralty under my orders: for although the *Mars*, *Minotaur*, and *Quebec* joined me as I passed St. Helen's yet they sailed with separate orders from the Admiralty, which will be very material for the consideration of the Court; and although as superior officer, I had undoubtedly a power to assume the command of any of them, yet under the particular circumstances I did not hold it necessary or discreet so to do. The *Mars*, *Minotaur* and *Quebec* had not only been placed under the separate and independent command of Sir Charles Cotton, but the order to that officer was accompanied with a letter from the Admiralty, directing him only to accompany me to the distance of fifty leagues from Scilly, and then to proceed to a station pointed out in the order to which the letter referred; and he was further expressly directed to convey this information to me, which was the only intelligence indeed I received upon the subject. For so little did it appear to be the intention of the Admiralty that I should consider these ships as part of my squadron, that I had no official communication from the Admiralty concerning them, nor even knew that they were to accompany me, till Sir Charles came on board of the *Royal Sovereign* at St. Helen's.

Although I had the power, therefore, to shift my flag into any of these ships in case of an emergency sufficient to justify my superseding the Admiralty orders to Sir Charles Cotton, yet it was so far from being of course as if they had been ships of my own squadron, that I should have been subject to a court martial for such a proceeding, and could only have justified myself by the necessity or the expediency of the occasion.

It seems therefore hard that an officer should be subjected to a court martial for not having exercised a discretion, for the exercise of which he must have been subject to a court martial also. These ships were besides not fitted for foreign service, nor provided with provisions or stores for such a voyage. The boatswain and carpenter, with a lieutenant and a number of men belonging to the *Mars*, had been left behind in England, having been dispatched while she was at St. Helen's, to bring off stores necessary for that ship even for channel service, which rendered her under these circumstances, very unfit for the reception of my flag. And with regard to the *Minotaur*, I had, twelve months before, at the desire of Capt. Louis, whilst I was senior flag officer of the channel fleet at this port, officially stated to the Admiralty that she had defects in her bottom, and that she had been upon the rocks near Plymouth; since which time I had again learned from Captain Louis, that she had been twice or thrice ashore in Quiberon bay.

It was impossible, therefore, under these circumstances, that I could have considered it to be my duty to transfer my flag to the *Minotaur*, because I was so sensible of her being totally unfit for the West India station, that I did not leave her to receive orders there for her future government, but directed her to return immediately to Spithead, after seeing the convoy in safety to Barbadoes.

If indeed I had been engaged in action, or had been pursuing an immediate and overruling object of service, paramount even to the charge of so large and critical a convoy, I hope to find credit with the Court, from my long service and experience, that I should instantly have transferred my flag and person, at all hazards, either of health or life; but being in a situation totally different, and being invested with that discretion which must belong to every officer invested with a superior command, I had a right to judge what was best, and I formed and exercised a

different judgment. To have thrown myself precipitately into another ship, without the conveniences which my state of health has long rendered but too necessary, not for comfort alone, but for the discharge of duties which from habitual infirmities I have not always without great attention been equal to, would have been to give up the real substance of my duty to a false appearance of zeal to perform it.

To have shifted my flag without taking with me my officers whose fidelity I had long proved, and in whose assistance in case of emergencies I confided, would not only have been an unnecessary sacrifice, but would have been engaging on a service which I should not have originally undertaken, and which in fact I never undertook.

It ought surely to be a real and momentous emergency which deprives a commander in chief of the common comforts and assistance which, by the customs of the service, apply to officers of inferior rank: on the other hand, to have made the regular exchange of the establishment of two large ships at sea, would have been to have delayed the convoy without an object of corresponding magnitude, and to have subjected it by that delay to those probable mischances which had before proved so fatal to the West India expedition; and perhaps in the end to have been frustrated (which it would in fact have been) by a change of weather before it was accomplished. The Court will also bear in mind the length of time it must necessarily employ (to say nothing of the probable, or rather inevitable interruptions at sea) in removing stores, ammunition, and provisions, with every thing that would have been necessary to have carried into any ship for active service, more especially into a ship not originally equipped for it; recollecting also, that if in the midst of such a process an enemy had appeared in force, it might have been fatal to the convoy, and even to his Majesty's ships.

These were my reasons for dispatching the *Minotaur* with the convoy, and for returning with the *Royal Sovereign* to England; as by this course I forwarded the quick passage of the fleet, which I considered to be the primary object, at the same time that my own personal presence in the West Indies could also be secured by that instant repair, or change of ship in port; the first of which was impracticable at sea, and the other, for the reasons I have submitted to the Court, highly inexpedient. I really

thought that the plan I adopted, amidst the contending difficulties I had to encounter, was the best for his Majesty's service, thinking it highly probable that I should myself reach the West Indies before the consequences of the arrival of the reinforcements could have rendered my presence urgent or critical ; for I must entreat the Court always to hold in remembrance that this immediate and pressing urgency was never suggested to me by the Admiralty, directly or indirectly, until after I had taken the measure which has been disapproved of, and returned back again into port.

If the opinion which I thus formed, under all these circumstances, was not the best which might have been adopted by an unerring judgment, I deeply lament it, and cheerfully submit to have it corrected by the judgment of the Court. Yet for the honour and advantage of the service, I feel an interest beyond myself in claiming for a Flag Officer, charged with a high command, the exercise of a reasonable discretion in service, if to your justice it shall appear that I acted to the best of an honest judgment.

By the customs of the Navy, as far as I have been able to collect them from experience, superior officers have never been held responsible in their lives and stations, or in their characters, which are dearer than both, for mere differences of judgment in cases where men meaning fairly to discharge their duties, and not criminally ignorant of what they exact from them, may fairly and reasonably be supposed to differ ; more especially when the act or transaction to be judged of has been followed by no disastrous consequences, nor has drawn after it any inconvenience to the public.

I confess it appears to me, that if without any standard but the infinitely divided opinion of men in official situations, the characters of officers were subject to be shaken by trials, without any previous complaint, or antecedent judgment of the profession upon their conduct, it might be attended with the most serious consequence to the dignity and independence of the Navy.

With regard to my intentions, they are for your judgment, candidly measuring them (as I know you will) by the ordinary, or rather the universal, principles of human action.

The command, as I have stated in the introduction of my Defence, and which I am charged with having abandoned, was

not originally pressed upon me by authority, but had been voluntarily accepted as a gracious distinction of my supposed capacity to discharge it.

It was accepted after a series of such unremitting services (I wish to say nothing of them but their continuance), and under the pressure of such almost disqualifying infirmities, as made the avoiding it altogether perfectly consistent with my own honour and the liberal customs of British Government.

It was pursued at a very great expence in the equipment necessary for a long voyage and a distant station.

It was followed (as will appear by the evidence) by unremitting anxiety and activity to accomplish the most early sailing ; and therefore had it been my first command, had I given no former proofs of obedience to command, of zeal for the navy, or attachment to my country, yet surely it would be difficult for the most ingenious malice or uncharitableness to have ascribed my return to a wilful abandonment of my station—an abandonment so singular and so sudden—within so short a time after I had embarked the character of a long and laborious life upon the due discharge of it—without the pressure of dangers to subdue patience or to shake resolution—and indeed without the intervention of a single circumstance, which, judging an individual by the general character of human nature, could be supposed to have drawn me aside from the path of my duty, as far as I understood its direction.

I do not therefore believe that the high and respectable Board, which is my prosecutor, imputes to me a base or disloyal purpose, but that it is my judgment only which is arraigned before you. In answer to that I have shortly, and without the smallest reserve or management, laid my whole mind before you, as it produced my conduct. If it appears to you to have been criminally weak and ignorant, it may be censured or punished at your discretion ; but unless you are prepared to pronounce against me this disqualifying and mortifying judgment, I am persuaded that you will not reduce the condition and character of a superior officer to a perilous and servile dependence upon the shades and varieties of judgment.

It is one thing to judge in the moment and upon the occasion, and another after the event and upon mature deliberation. It is one thing to discharge a duty, having a single and prescribed

duty to exercise, and another to fulfil a command which is complex and discretionary ; and therefore the wise policy and humane justice of this enlightened country has immemorially judged all persons in authority, civil or military, by the heart and intention, which are the fountains of action ; examining conduct by a fair and liberal standard, allowing for reasonable differences of opinion, or even for accidental errors, consistent with an intelligent capacity, punishing only wilful misconduct ; or ignorance, which, no doubt, becomes criminal when it undertakes trusts which it has not the capacity to understand or perform.

I trust in God that I shall not be placed by your sentence in either of these degraded classes of delinquency.

I cannot acquit the first charge without observing, that upon my return to port, and after I had transmitted my Journal to the Admiralty, and had explained generally the same reasons I have now submitted to the Court, I was not only continued in my command, and directed to pursue the voyage in another ship, but was favoured by a confidential letter from the First Lord of the Admiralty, speaking only with regret of an event which is now made the subject of so solemn a trial, inviting to a second command, and enclosing by the same conveyance a notification of appointment to the honourable and flattering distinction of Rear-Admiral of Great Britain, the officer, who, in his opinion, had betrayed the first.

I do not urge this by way of complaint against others, but in my own defence, because it shews manifestly that when the whole case was laid before the Admiralty, although my return was treated as the subject of just regret, yet it certainly never was considered as a violation of my duty ; I am at a loss even now to understand at what period, and under what circumstances, it first assumed the highly criminal complexion which is now affixed to it. Had I sailed again in the *Astrea*, I could not, surely, then have been arraigned for my return in the *Royal Sovereign* ; and it is hardly to be supposed that the Government would remit the punishment of an officer, whose conduct appeared to them to be reprehensible, and pass by the censure fit to be pronounced upon his neglect or ignorance, only that he might again be invested with the same trust which he had just before violated, whilst so many meritorious and skilful officers were within the summons of a moment to supersede him. This,

however, if the first charge be well founded was precisely my case with regard to the Admiralty on my return to Spithead, as appears to the Court by the third article of the charge exhibited against me.

My answer to the second charge of returning into port, necessarily involved in the discussion of the first, being already before the Court, I now proceed to observe upon the remaining article, of not proceeding in the *Astrea* frigate to the West Indies, in pursuance of the order from the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

This charge is of a nature totally dissimilar to the two former, and must undoubtedly be judged upon principles entirely different. I had here neither judgment to form nor discretion to exercise, but an order to obey.

I trust after so many years service I shall not be found endeavouring to sap the foundations of all discipline, by setting up any privilege in an officer to refuse his service in any shape, in which the Sovereign, or those representing him, shall require. Such sacred and essential principles as subordination and obedience in all military service, and indeed in all government, shall not be wounded by my defence, as I trust they have not been questioned by my conduct. I place my vindication wholly upon the fact—relying on my conscience for my intention, and appealing to the correspondence for the proof, I solemnly and firmly deny that I am guilty of any disobedience.

On my return to Spithead I acquainted the Admiralty with the reasons for my conduct, and transmitted my Journal of the circumstances by which it was governed, in the manner already in evidence before the Court.

This communication produced the order in question, which I admit to have been positive, but which I deny was disobeyed. When I received the order to hoist my flag on board the *Astrea* frigate, taking with me my Secretary and Flag-Lieutenant, it could not be with the view of resuming my command of the convoy, then far advanced upon its voyage; but obviously (and indeed as expressed on the face of the order) that I might pursue the objects committed to me by my commission of command in the West Indies.

A trust so important and intricate was no light consideration, and could not have been conscientiously undertaken without a

reasonable confidence of being in a condition to discharge it. Under the circumstances directed by the order, I found myself in no such condition.

If the hoisting my flag in the frigate in question, without my officers, or the other appointments provided for me, had been but an abridgment of my own comfort, I can only appeal to my past life and services for the probability of my opposing a difficulty upon the subject. If even perilous to my health, I had only viewed that peril, as it was applicable to my own personal enjoyments, I must again refer to your candid judgment of my disposition. But I felt far otherwise ; I was scarcely fit for that service at all when I originally undertook it : I was indeed only fit for any service with great management of my health, and by no means able to support the anxiety of high responsibility, without the assistance of those with whom I had been accustomed to act, and in whom I reposed a confidence which kept my mind at rest : I was besides obliged to sleep in a close apartment, so that the common changes of the weather frequently affected me to a dangerous degree with gout and fever, which if not critically attended to must have totally disqualified me for my trust. In such a state of health, I could not, as an honest man, undertake an important command in a most critical season, which might call for great and unremitting exertions, and at a distance too, where my place could not on a sudden be supplied, without first submitting that condition of my health to the consideration of the Admiralty, which might have been unknown or overlooked. I could not enter upon such a service in the manner prescribed by the order, with the expectation, of perhaps being, on my arrival in the West Indies, a fitter object for an hospital than for the trying station of an important and complicated command. I certainly felt these reasons as sufficient, not indeed to vindicate disobedience, but to warrant my submitting them to the authority which was to decide upon their effect. If the First Lord of the Admiralty had not accompanied the first order with a private letter (obligingly as I then considered it) I probably should have been more particular in the detail in my answer to the Board ; but I was sufficiently so to have protected me against the charge of a mutinous disobedience ; as my answer humbly proposed for their Lordships' consideration, my desire of proceeding in the *Royal Sovereign*, assigning the precarious state of my health as

the reason of my conduct, which I expressed in the following words :—

“ I beg, Sir, that you will be pleased to state to their Lordships my readiness to proceed in the *Royal Sovereign* the moment her defects are made good, if it should meet their Lordships’ approbation ; but the very precarious state of my health obliges me to decline going out in a small frigate, a stranger to every person on board, without accommodation or any comfort whatever.”

The words of this letter speak for themselves ; and even if my expressions had been ambiguous, it could not in reason be supposed that any man in his senses, who had spent his whole life in the service, and whose nearest and dearest relation was then in one of the highest departments of a Government, to which he himself had ever been steadily attached, would have answered an order of the Board of Admiralty, accompanied even by an unusual and civil communication from the First Lord in explanation of it, by a flat disobedience, which would have been rank mutiny upon the very face of it ; such an interpretation you never will put upon such a letter ; you will rather read it in the true spirit with which it was obviously written, and give it the only construction which it can reasonably bear ; much more when the whole correspondence is put together and considered. If the Admiralty, on receiving my letter, had repeated its order, I should have had then no alternative but obedience, or proof (if I had disobeyed it) of incapacity to obey. Had I gone to sea in the Frigate upon the rejection of my proposition, and the repetition of the order after the explanation of my reasons for desiring to be released from it, though I might have been unfit for the duty, my conscience would then have been released from the burden of having voluntarily undertaken it ; and there is no evidence whatever before the Court, that I would have refused obedience, if the Admiralty after my representation had continued its command. My representation against the order was meant as the respectful dictate of conscience and duty, not as the defiance of mutiny or disrespect. The language of it will bear no other construction ; but even had its language been ambiguous, men are not to be caught up by their expressions ; above all men who by their habits are not led to the nice discrimination of phrases and words, but their motives and intentions are to be

judged of. My answer indeed was so far from being either intended or expressed as a disobedience to the order, that it contained a proposition to the Board for its approbation ; which, had it been approved, would have annulled it, and I could not possibly know the pleasure of the Board upon that head, till I received the letter from the Admiralty of the 17th March : if that letter had contained the rejection of the proposition I had made concerning the *Royal Sovereign*, together with a repetition of the original order, and I had then declined to obey it, the Court in such case could undoubtedly have had nothing to consider, but whether I was under an incapacity to obey.

I am not contending for any relaxation of discipline, God forbid that I should ! but the Board, instead of considering me as guilty of disobedience from my first answer, or enforcing its original order, on the rejection of my proposition, issued a second order, directing me to continue my flag on Board the *Royal Sovereign* at Spithead. Until the moment of my receiving this second order, which wholly countermanded the first, I had no means of knowing the pleasure of the Board concerning the proposition I had made ; and it cannot surely be contended that I was bound to shift my flag to the *Astrea* before I received the Admiralty's answer to my proposal to continue in the *Royal Sovereign*. It is impossible therefore to charge me with disobedience of the first order until I received the second, because until that period the proposition I had made was unreplyed to ; and after receiving the second order, I could not then obey the first, because the second had superseded it.

Had it been intimated, or even hinted to me, that an interpretation was put upon my letter so inconsistent with my duty, and so repugnant to the character of my whole life, I should have had an opportunity of giving the same explanation of my conduct to the Board which I have to-day submitted to the Court ; but unfortunately for the service, and for me, I was not given to understand the light in which my answer had been considered, until I learnt it from a notice that a Court Martial was to be held to inquire into my conduct. I therefore submit humbly to the Court, that I am not at all in the condition of an officer who has disobeyed an order for a reason of which he makes himself the ultimate judge, because such a person must shew an incapacity to obey, which alone can justify disobedience from an absolute

incapacity to obey, but am contending that I have not disobeyed at all. I did not set up the condition of my health as an ultimate bar to the fulfilment of the order, but from a sense of honour not to undertake a duty which I could not discharge with advantage to the public, I interposed a reason for relieving me from obedience, which I submitted to the judgment of my superiors.

This cannot be a crime unless it is to be established as a general proposition, that no obstacle to the execution of an order, though unknown to the persons who issue it, can be even communicated and submitted to any public Board, by the highest officers in the King's service, without a breach of duty and a contempt of discipline.

If I suffer from such a rule, I shall be the first victim of it, and my punishment the first publication of its existence. A signification of the pleasure of Government in all its departments, civil and military, to magistrates and officers charged with important trusts, has not hitherto been supposed to preclude representation from those who are to execute them. Even an entire resignation of stations in which the King may unquestionably command the services of all his subjects in military ranks, and in many that are civil, has never been considered as a contempt of the King's authority, until the resignation has been rejected and the refusal to serve insisted on notwithstanding. The whole system of British laws, civil and criminal, are calculated to preserve rational obedience to order; not to catch men in snares, who never felt a disposition to disobey. When a communication is made, accompanied with a reason for declining the execution of an order, the reason has always been taken to be a submission of its validity to the power which is to decide upon it; because the reason (supposing it to exist) may either be rejected by authority as insufficient, or if held sufficient, its sufficiency may be made the subject of trial.

Upon this principle I acted, and upon this principle I rest my defence. I submitted to the Admiralty my reasons for declining to proceed in the *Astrea*, and humbly offered an alternative proposition. Surely, therefore, no disobedience could exist till that proposition was adopted or rejected; and the second order which rejected it, countermanded also the first order, which could never therefore be disobeyed.

Having now completely refuted the charge of disobedience,

I cannot help here lamenting (I might indeed in any other situation than the present, employ the language of complaint) that although in my answer to the Board of Admiralty, on receiving the first order, I had most unequivocally expressed my readiness to continue my command in the *Royal Sovereign*, when she should be fit for sea, and which plainly comprehended any other ship not subject to the objection I had made to the *Astrea*, and which I only submitted from the precarious state of my health, as distinctly stated in my letter, yet the First Lord of the Admiralty, in the answer which he returned to it, was pleased to pledge the opinion of the Board to my having indicated a determination wholly to relinquish the command, an opinion which the Board did not take upon itself to deliver upon issuing the second order, and which I take upon myself to submit very humbly to the Court, could not in common justice have been pronounced ; since an objection to a particular mode of executing my command, existing from no fault of mine, and not subject to my controul, coupled with the fullest tender of my services in any mode not within the scope of that objection, can neither in reason nor in common candour be construed into a determination to relinquish my command altogether. Yet such a construction was fastened upon my letter, not only contrary to the plain intention of the writer, but in the teeth of the very language in which he distinctly expresses himself.

But what is still more remarkable, and which I have still greater reason to regret, if not actually to complain of, is that even in this letter, which imputes to me not merely the disobedience regarding the *Astrea*, but which engrafts upon it the unauthorised and unfounded imputation of having determined to relinquish my command, the First Lord of the Admiralty does not even write to me as an officer guilty of mutinous disobedience, but as one, who having declined a particular service, is not to expect to be employed in any other ; and it was not till after my reply to that letter, in which I stated myself to have been misunderstood, that I was informed my conduct was to be the subject of a Court Martial. And to my utter astonishment, not merely for the supposed disobedience regarding the *Astrea*, but for returning in my ship to Spithead, although subsequent to my return, and the communications of all my reasons for it to the Admiralty, the First Lord had courteously gone out of his official

course to write to me upon that subject, and to use his own expressions, had concluded I had very satisfactory reasons for not shifting my flag, and for returning in the *Royal Sovereign* to England.

If this be the regular course of service, the character of a British officer is more precarious than I have hitherto considered it.

I confess it appears to me that, upon these principles, the higher the command the danger and inconvenience increase. A captain of a man of war has his appointed and certain command. He has his ship to conduct, with his officers to assist him, and in the ordinary course of service is not subject to be removed, nor his conduct open to question whilst his commission continues, and whilst he obeys his orders, which are generally simple and distinct.

But the condition of an Admiral, and, above all, of one commanding in chief, is widely and essentially different; he has many judgments to form, which must be formed upon the sudden, and which must proceed upon his own views and opinions.

If upon small occasions, where the public service has sustained no stateable loss or inconvenience, and without the charge or complaint of any officers witnesses to his proceedings, the conduct of such an officer were subject to be hung in the wavering scales of opinion, instead of being subjected to the plain and ordinary principles of criminal justice, there would be a speedy end of all that firmness and confidence which is so essentially necessary to high command.

The character of an officer is a delicate thing: it suffers from rash question as well as from condemnation, and the service suffers along with it.

An officer sacrifices, to his honest fame and to the approbation of his country, the enjoyment of many of the comforts which render human life delightful. The attainment of it in any degree is a prize difficult to be earned, and not lightly to be put in hazard. Subordination to authority is undoubtedly to be cherished and supported, but it is never in greater danger than when affection in service is unrequited, and security in good intention is shaken. I feel more than I can express upon this subject, and I speak myself to those who cannot but feel along with me. My own

conscience acquits me of all blame ; and if your judgment shall fortunately confirm it, my satisfaction will be complete.

Cornwallis called evidence to prove the impossibility of repairs being effected to the *Royal Sovereign* in the West Indies : also as to his bad state of health.

At the end of the second day the Court delivered their verdict, which was to the effect that :—

“ Misconduct is imputable to the Vice Admiral for not having proceeded to the West Indies either in the *Mars* or *Minotaur* ; but in consideration of the circumstances of the case, they do acquit him of any further censure on that account. The Court is also of opinion that the charge of disobedience to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty of the 15th March last, by declining to proceed to Barbadoes in the *Astrea*, is not proved, they therefore acquit him thereof ; and he is hereby acquitted accordingly.”

All things considered, Cornwallis was lucky to get off as he did. Whether Spencer was in any way influenced against him on account of what had happened a few months before is not possible to say, but one feels that the First Lord's attitude was correct and that he was bound to take action in the matter ; also that he behaved generously in not bringing forward the evidence that Cornwallis had requested to be relieved of his appointment only a short time before he sailed. Had this come before the court it is possible the verdict might have been a different one. Spencer's point of view is shown in a letter which he wrote to Marquis Cornwallis after the trial, in which he said :—

MY DEAR LORD,—

I cannot help taking the first moment, after having been informed of the sentence of the court martial, to express the satisfaction I feel that the court have seen in your brother's case circumstances of so favourable a nature as to induce them to pass the sentence they have done. You know how much I have felt on the necessity which I thought my public duty imposed upon me on this occasion, and having the satisfaction of reflecting that I have fulfilled that duty, it is a great relief to me in every point of view, and more particularly on your account, that nothing of a more disagreeable nature has arisen from it.

[*Spencer Papers.*]

Cornwallis was the recipient of many congratulations upon the result of his trial. His brother, the Bishop, wrote :—

“I have seen several people who have all wished me joy of the conclusion of your business as fully and completely satisfactory. All speak of you in the highest terms.”

Lord Lansdowne wrote :—

“I will certainly record your trial with great attention, for I assure you that very few things would give me more concern, than that this Country should be deprived of the assistance, without a compliment, of one of the first officers of Europe.”

The following letter from his advocate, the Hon. Thomas Erskine, is of interest, and shows what *his* feelings were about the whole proceedings of the court-martial. It was written five years later, when Cornwallis was appointed to command the Channel Fleet :—

MY DEAR SIR,—

I have just heard with the utmost satisfaction your appointment to the command of the Channel Fleet, a measure worthy of Lord St. Vincent and what the country had a right to expect at this critical and momentous period ; I have often reflected with the greatest chagrin and disgust on the proceedings which introduced me to the Honor of your acquaintance, and I do assure you that I take the strongest interest in your fame and prosperity, an interest which your services have created universally in the minds of your Countrymen. I heard nothing of Whitby for a great while ; but I suppose his pendant will soon be flying in your fleet.

I have, etc., etc., etc.,

T. ERSKINE.

CHAPTER IX

1796-1800

IN all the short biographical memoirs of Cornwallis it has always been stated that after his trial he requested permission to strike his flag, and that it was readily given. This is not the case. The order the Admiralty sent him on April 14th is quite clear. After recounting the fact that another officer had been appointed to take over his command, it states "you are hereby required and directed to strike your flag and come on shore." It has also been suggested that he refused to serve under Spencer, but the following letter he wrote the Admiralty, dated December 1st of this year, shows that whatever animosity he might have felt towards the First Lord he put his duty to his country first. The letter reads:—

"I request you will be pleased to communicate to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that impressed as I am with the idea (under the circumstances of my case) a general offer of my service cannot be deemed necessary. Yet in defence of my own honour I think myself bound to state that my Zeal for the welfare of the Country in general, and that service in particular to which I am immediately attached, is as warm as I trust it has manifested itself to have been upon all occasions. Under the present urgencies of the Country I confess however that I feel considerable satisfaction in reflecting that I am not the instrument of my own retirement."

The only answer he got to this was to the effect that it had been read to the Board. A period of retirement from active service now commenced, and Cornwallis at first went to live in a small house at Aldwick, on the outskirts of Chichester. It was here that he allowed himself to cultivate his love of horses. One of his old subordinates, Lieutenant Ricketts, a nephew of St. Vincent's, wrote:—

"I sincerely hope your health is restored, but this tempestuous season must be unfriendly to your horse or curricie exercise."

He kept up his correspondence with Nelson and all his old associates. Captain Whitby continued his career, but the Admiral, ever mindful of his friends' interests, wrote to Nelson concerning him, who replied :—

March 30th, 1798. Wind E.S.E.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

If I meet the *Triton*, Mr. Whitby shall go with me to Lord St. Vincent. It is my pride and pleasure to boast of your friendship, and ever believe me, yours most affectionately,

HORATIO NELSON.

Nelson wrote again the following January from Palermo in answer to a letter from Cornwallis congratulating him upon his Nile victory and wishing him further success :—

Nothing could give me more pleasure than receiving a wish from my very old acquaintance, who has more than once saved my life by his friendship and taught me by his example to beat the French. My honors, my riches, the gift of a gracious sovereign and my country are beyond my deserts, yet believe me, my dear friend, I see but little real happiness for me on this side of the grave, and when it shall please God to call me I shall go with pleasure.

Ever, ever believe me, your oblig'd, faithful, and affectionate friend,

NELSON.

Considering that at the period when this was written, Nelson is supposed to have been basking in the smiles of Lady Hamilton, the letter is both curious and interesting.

Captain Pakenham (afterwards Admiral), although he was strongly opposed to the attitude of his brother-officers over the affair of the Duke of York's memo, wrote to the Admiral about this time, saying :—

"Matters I learn with respect to you and of course to our service are not mended since we sailed. I am sorry for it and cannot but fear it will have a bad ending to the country."

Cornwallis also received a gossipy letter from his niece Elizabeth :—

“My ears have hardly recovered the royal review on the birthday. James [her brother] saw it ; he says it was as fine a sight as John Bull would wish for, and that many emigrants were there and seemed struck with it. All the world is mad about the new play, called *Pizarro*. James went to the door last night, but found it impossible to squeeze his little person in. I like your fancying the sailors would have forgot you. The lower orders are not always quite so forgetful as the higher in my opinion. Do not call me a democrat for saying this.”

It was in the summer of this year that Cornwallis migrated further west and took up his abode at Newlands, then a small farm which he leased and subsequently purchased from Sir John d'Oyley. He lived in a two-roomed wooden hut or bungalow, as it would now be called, while the farmhouse was being got ready for his accommodation. One of the first letters he received at his new address was from Lieutenant Ricketts, who wrote to congratulate him on his promotion to Admiral of the Blue the previous year. Ricketts was now Flag-Lieutenant to St. Vincent, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet. Part of this letter is given as showing that matters between St. Vincent and the Admiralty were not entirely harmonious. It says :—

“Rear Adml. Berkeley has sent in his resignation—which the Peer enjoy’s amazingly—and continues in high health and spirits—daily working in the public cause—and delighted at having in many instances conquered a ‘quaint opposition,’ wherein the junior Lords have appear’d. He observed the other day the Topsail braces received at Portsmouth were bad—and entirely burnt up—the whole length was directly put into a large case—and sent—directed—to my Lord Spencer—by the *Plymth* Waggon. He laugh’d heartily at my observing the *assemblage* on the package being opened would make a good caricature.”

He also received two from his brother, the Marquis, who was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who, speaking of the Act of Union lately passed, wrote in June :—

“Our Union business is now happily over, and I have the satisfaction to say that there is no appearance of ill-humour or disturbance in any part of the island, or even in Dublin, where it

was most unpopular. Several of the most respectable, although by no means the least violent of the opposition, have declared that, since the measure has received the sanction of the Legislature, they would support it with as much zeal as they would maintain any other law of the land.

“This important event has totally changed the relative situation of this country, and if the English Government act wisely, those evils which have brought not only Ireland but the whole British Empire to the brink of destruction may, in the course of a few years, be entirely removed.

“I cannot venture to look forward to any precise time for my own deliverance, and am much afraid that it cannot come as soon as I wish. But I feel that I grow old, and it is natural for me, after having been employed so long in situations of labour and anxiety, to look with impatience for the hour of quiet and retirement.”

In his second letter written the following December, after indignantly denying that he has had an attack of gout, he said :—

“Whenever people see a man walk lame, they immediately cry out that it is the gout. For my part, I am pretty indifferent about these matters. If a man of 62 can go quietly off the stage without pain, he has no right to be dissatisfied. . . .

“Matters look as ill as possible in the north, and in Germany ; God only knows how we shall weather our present difficulties. I confess that for a long time I have been given to despond. Whoever tells you of my being in good spirits knows very little what passes in my breast. It is the duty of persons who have so odious a part as mine assigned to them to keep up appearances.”

Another document of an interesting nature was found among the Admiral's papers in the shape of a copy of a letter from a lieutenant of Marines which gave the first intimation of trouble which might have led to an even more famous mutiny than that of the *Nore* two years previous to this date. The following is an extract :—

“A Marine is just returned from the Hospital who says that he was one night called into one of the Nurses' Cabins by Two men belonging to the *Pompée*—one belonging to the *Ethalion*, and one to the *Terrible*—with some others, drinking. They desired him to take a glass. When he sat they told him that whenever the Fleet arrived in Port again there would be a general and more

terrible Mutiny than ever yet happened on board the large Ships, that it was all arranged and settled, but with much more secrecy than the last. On asking their cause of complaint they said they had none against Government but the Tyranny of their Captains, whom they were resolved to sacrifice to a man.”

FIFTH PHASE

1801—1802

FIRST BLOCKADE OF BREST

CHAPTER I

1801

EARLY in 1801 Pitt resigned office on account of his disagreement with the King over the Irish Catholic Emancipation Bill. St. Vincent, upon the new Administration coming into power, had become First Lord, and his first act was to offer Cornwallis the appointment of Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet which he himself had just vacated. The *Times* of February 23rd of this year, commenting on the appointment, said :—

“Admiral Cornwallis is appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet. Next to the noble Earl, who has resigned that command, there is no officer of whom the Navy has a higher opinion than of the noble Admiral nominated as his successor.”

Writing from Dublin Castle to congratulate his brother on his new appointment, Marquis Cornwallis wrote :—

DEAR WILLIAM,—

Our political Horizon is at present more gloomy than ever, and there seem to be great objections on the part of a very High Personage to turn the Union with Ireland to the greatest possible account, by conciliating the Mass of the People here, and making them good subjects : If that system is not to be pursued, we must trust entirely to our Wooden Walls. You will easily conceive how mortifying all this must be to me.

Writing of Lord Gardner, who was in command at Cork, he continues :—

“I have heard very little of Lord Gardner [an old friend of Cornwallis ; they had served together under Rodney in 1782], since the first letters of civility passed between us on his arrival, they say He is low spirited and sees very few people. This was

not the case with his Predecessor, who, altho' He did not spend his own money much in entertainments, He went very sociably to visit his neighbour, whenever he was invited, and by that means rendered himself very popular, without making himself poor.

"May God send you opportunity and success."

Thus, after five years of irksome retirement, Cornwallis recommenced his active career; and was to master the problem of a close blockade of a hostile fleet, a task upon which he was engaged for four out of the next five years. His first request to the Admiralty was that his old friend, Captain Whitby, who was serving at the time in the West Indies, might be allowed to rejoin him as his Flag-Captain: a request that was immediately granted. On February 24th the Admiral hoisted his flag on board the *Ville de Paris* and immediately proceeded to his station off Ushant. When one considers the tempestuous nature of the mouth of the Channel and the Bay of Biscay, and the smallness of the ships engaged as compared with the monsters of to-day, it is possible to gain some idea of the difficulties and hardships of the undertaking, quite apart from the extreme discomfort.

His friends and relations did their best to enliven the monotony of his constant watching. His best correspondent was his niece, Elizabeth Cornwallis. In one of her letters written from Bath she said:—

"Irish affairs prosper; but when we receive the members from thence, we shall want a new House of Lords, as ours overflows already with Mr. Pitt's peers."

At the date when Cornwallis took over the command of the Channel Fleet the naval situation was one of more or less complete stagnation. The British Fleet had entire command of the seas, and what ships were left to France, Spain and Holland were blockaded in their ports.

In March of this year, from information received through agents and by the old ruse (which seemed possible in those days) of sending in a frigate under a flag of truce on some pretext or other, it appeared that at Brest, L'Orient and Rochefort the French and Spanish were making desperate efforts for a final venture. Sir James Saumarez was in command of the inshore squadron off Brest, and Sir Edward Pellew was blockading the other mentioned ports. Both these officers sent reports to this

effect. Cornwallis duly passed these on to the Admiralty. In his reply, St. Vincent said :—

“We have a variety of intelligence which confirms that sent by Sir James Saumarez, and if these gentry do not make their escape soon they will find it very difficult when the days are longer, and the weather more moderate.”

He wrote again on March 28th :—

“I never did give credit to the intention of the combined fleet to measure with ours until within these few days ; but on combining the intelligence from every quarter, I do in my conscience believe you will have the honour and happiness of finishing the war by a glorious achievement.”

Cornwallis, in his reply to this, stooped to flattery, to which St. Vincent was particularly susceptible, for he said :—

“If the combined gentlemen venture out to fight, I believe the chief inducement with them is that they are pretty sure of not meeting your Lordship at the head of the English Fleet.”

Not to be outdone in good manners, St. Vincent replied :—

“The French have seen, felt and understood so much of your character that theirs must be changed materially if they face you in preference to your very sincere and obedient servant.”

Nothing, however, happened, and the French and Spanish remained in port.

Mention has been made of sending in a frigate under a flag of truce, to endeavour to obtain information. The following is an example ; it is the report of a Lieutenant Pilfold, who had been sent in by Sir James Saumarez to see what he could discover. Not only did he find out a great deal, but he appears to have had an animated conversation with the French Admiral, who gave him gratis all the information he desired !

“IMPETUEUX” AT SEA. *April 6th, 1801.*

The French Squadron lying in Isle d’Aix Road are moored in a Line directly across, from the Inner point of Isle d’Aix, to the Southermost point of the Longe Bank, and are placed in the following manner :—

The *Ambuscade* within a Cable’s length of the Island, then the *Guerrier*, *Union Argonant*, *Foudroyant* and Bomb Vessel within a half a Cable’s length of each other, in a line from N.E. to S.W.

The *Argonant* (in which Ship Admiral Bedout had his Flag

hoisted) appeared to be well manned, but by no means in good Order; she was very dirty, and the Sailors badly clothed, the Quarter Deck was at all times full of Men of every Description, and there seemed but little order and Discipline kept up amongst them. The *Argonant* was very badly finished, and appeared to be of a small scantling for so large a ship, and her main Deck Ports particularly small. The *Union*, *Guerrier* and *Ambuscade* were full of Men; but on board the *Foudroyant* I never observed more than one hundred men on deck at a time, and I am inclined to think she had not more than two hundred Men on board her. I observed in Rochefort three ships with their T.G. Masts struck, but the haze was so great I could not determine whether they were frigates or ships of the Line. The Admiral informed me that two thousand men were landed on Isle D'Aix on the first day we stood in to reconnoitre them, and that more Troops were expected there every hour; that, about a week ago, 20,000 Troops had passed within a few Leagues of Rochelle, on their Route to join the Spanish Troops on the Frontier of Portugal. The French Squadron under Admiral Ganteaume had also escaped from Toulon, but no accounts had been received of them since.

JOHN PILFOLD, *Lieut.*

Owing to the apparently advanced state of the Enemy's preparations in Brest and other French ports the Admiralty suggested to Cornwallis that he should divide his main fleet and reinforce both Saumarez and Pellew. Cornwallis was strongly opposed to the suggestion. While expressing his readiness "to execute their Lordships' commands if they should think such a measure advisable," he pointed out the imprudence of leaving half, or in fact all, "the ships of two decks separated from the rest of the Squadron, and without any certainty of their joining me should the Enemy come out in force."

St. Vincent agreed, and wrote privately on April 20th:—

"Upon a review of Captain D'Auvergne's intelligence, and coupling it with the observations made by Captain Cunningham of the *Clyde*, than whom I do not know a more correct officer, I incline to your opinion that your squadron should not be separated in the manner recommended by the Board; and I have the happiness to know that every individual member reposes the same confidence in your judgment, zeal and ability that I do,

and agrees with me in a full approbation of the disposition you have made of your frigates and advanced squadron under the orders of Sir James Saumarez, to keep up a communication between Brest and the body of your squadron."

In May of this year Admiral Hotham [a nephew of the first Lord Hotham] succeeded Saumarez in command of the inshore squadron off Brest. His first report was at variance with those hitherto received by the Commander-in-Chief; for it said:—

"In the night of the 20th one of the *Immortalité's* boats surprised a coasting sloop coming out of Brest; which being employed to fetch fire wood & other articles for the Fleet, her Patron was as able to give me as much information as any person I could expect to meet with in that manner. The boat also met & brought off some Seamen of the Spanish Fleet who were out fishing. Therefore they were able to speak of the state of *their* Ships.

"They were perfectly ignorant of any Orders having been received, or preparations being made, for the Sailing of their fleet; and that nothing was doing that wore that appearance. Some few Ships were manned, but the Majority were not, nor were they victualled for any considerable time.

"The French Admiral (Commanding in Chief), who has lately hoisted his flag in *L'Ocean*, is Mr. Villaret Joyeuse, but they knew not what has been the cause of it.

"The Spaniards say they know nothing of any preparations in their ships for coming to sea, & that they are doing nothing towards it. They were not quite clear in the name of their Commanding Admiral, but I understand that Admiral Gravina had left Brest, and was gone to Madrid; and that Admiral Cordova has within this fortnight hoisted his flag in his place. The Spaniards & French disagree very much, and the latter make it unpleasant, and even dangerous to be on shore, to the former. The Spanish ships are very shortly manned, having lost a vast many by sickness since they have been at Brest, & never have recruited, as nobody enter for their ships. They are still sickly, the seamen are not paid any wages, and they are very badly fed and clothed. They say there are at Brest in & out, of a condition for actual service, about 35 Sail of the Line of both Nations; But very few besides those that lay in the Road that are at all ready for sea."

The report goes on to give the number of ships, French and Spanish, and their classification.

An energetic officer, Captain Brisbane, conceived about this time the idea of destroying the French Fleet in Brest by means of fireships. Cornwallis was taken with the scheme, and, in order that the matter might be discussed at Headquarters, sent Brisbane home in a cutter with a personal letter to St. Vincent. In it he said :—

“His spirit of enterprize is certainly very honourable and truly commendable. As no attempt of the kind has been made if the utmost secrecy is observed and it meets with your Lordship’s approbation, I should hope something may be done. If the enemy do not push out before this plot is ready to be put in execution, I fear they will have given up their Intention.”

Writing in reply on June 22nd, St. Vincent said :—

“Whatever may be the event of the enterprize, I will support it and every other attempt you may judge fit to make on the Enemy’s Fleet.”

It was not, however, persevered with, and as the same plan was more fully entered into in the next war, the details of it are better deferred till a later chapter.

In July of this year Cornwallis was severely taken to task by the Admiralty for interfering with a court-martial sentence which had been confirmed the previous December. An unfortunate seaman had been sentenced to 300 lashes for desertion and, as it was not lawful to kill him, he had to take the punishments by instalments. Through the indulgence of his Captain he was a prisoner at large but had done his duties voluntarily. Captain Sotheby, the officer referred to, approached the Admiral with a request that he should intercede with the Admiralty in order to get the remainder of the man’s sentence remitted. Cornwallis remitted it first and reported it after! In those days discipline was more than severe—it was savage.

A curious case of an American citizen seeking to obtain his discharge is amongst the Admiral’s papers of this date. It is given as being an extraordinary record of a seaman’s variable existence. The following is taken from the draft of the Admiral’s letter, dated July 23rd, to the Admiralty dealing with the case :—

“I have to inform you that Will^m Corbets is apparently an American born at Boston (though without a Certificate); he sailed

from thence in the Year 1798 in the *Peggy* Schooner, was taken by a French Privateer Off Martinique ; he with his shipmates rose on the Crew and took possession of her, and was proceeding for Antiguas, but was again Captured by a French Brig bound to Bourdeaux ; was retaken by His Majesty's Ship *Ambuscade*, who the next day (he being on board) was Captured by a French corvette and carried into Rochelle ; he soon after came to England in a Cartelle, and was put on board His Majesty's Ship *Cambridge*, and from thence Drafted on board the *Robust*, where he now does his Duty in the Main top."

Privateers were a curse to neutrals in these days. They were out purely and simply for plunder, and in many cases were little better than pirates. Writing to Cornwallis in June, Sir Edward Pellew [afterwards Lord Exmouth], who was blockading Rochefort, said :—

"It is necessary I should inform you that we never speak a Neutral without having bitter Complaints against our privateers, I think the *Earl of St. Vincent* and the *Lord Nelson* Schooners are particularly implicated, and I have directed any of the Ships here to bring them to me for examination, if possible, that I may endeavour to prove the Complaints alledged, particularly by Americans."

Later in the year Pellew again had occasion to complain of the conduct of British privateers. Writing to Cornwallis on the subject, he said :—

"I beg leave to lay before you a statement of the behavior of the Commander of the *Cynthia* Lugger Privateer of Guernsey on several occasions since on this Coast, as you will observe by the enclosed Papers from Lieutenant Coghlan and Stupart.

"The Abuse of L^t Stupart in much groser terms than the paper states was proved by the Luggers Men on the *Impetueux* Quarter Deck before the commander ; and I should have been extremely glad to have had the power of punishing him ; all I could venture on was to make a Quarter Master lead him by the nose to the Gangway. I have had several Complaints of these Luggers from Neutrals and from the Inhabitants of Isle Dieu of their rapine and plunder.

"I therefore hope their Lordships will order their Commissions to be withdrawn from the owners of this who employ such impossible people to command them as disgrace the name

of Englishmen. I do assure you, Sir, the System carried on in the Seas by the Guernsey and Jersey Privateers both to friends and Enemies is marked by the most wanton and atrocious Robberies and must induce from Neutral Powers the most inveterate hatred to the Nation ; there is hardly one which we speak that does not complain of some robbery committed by them."

The French also used privateers whenever and wherever they were able to. A ship of this description, curiously rigged, was captured by Hotham in July. In reporting the matter to Cornwallis, he wrote :—

" I have the honor to inform you that at one o'clock in the morning of the 27th Inst., in Latitude $43^{\circ} 3' 4''$ N. and Longitude $11^{\circ} 4' 2''$ W., I had the good fortune to fall in with and at $\frac{1}{2}$ past Seven to Capture a remarkably fine and singularly constructed French Privateer with four Masts, named *L'Invention*, carrying 24 Guns on a flush deck and 210 Men.

" She is quite new, had only left Bourdeaux nine days before, on her first cruize, and had taken nothing. She is a beautiful Vessel on a plan entirely peculiar to herself, designed by her Commander, Mr. Thibaut ; and of extraordinary dimensions, being 147 feet long and 27 wide ; each mast is rigged in the usual manner, and she appears to me to answer perfectly well."

CHAPTER II

1801

MOST men of middle age probably read Captain Marryat's novels when they were boys, and were thrilled by them, more especially with the many accounts he gives of "cutting out" expeditions. Amongst the Admiral's papers there is an account of such an exploit which occurred in August 1801. Volunteer crews manned the boats of H.M. Ships *Beaulieu*, *Doris* and *Uranie*, for the purpose of entering the harbour of Camaret Bay (on the coast of France, near Brest) and seizing a French armed corvette lying at anchor under the protection of the guns, not only of the French Fleet, but also of the forts on shore. It is amazing to think that the attempt was ever contemplated, but that it was successfully carried out still more so. On this particular occasion the exploit was unfortunately marred by the jealousy which existed between two junior officers who took part in the expedition, but the account is so exciting that it is given in full:—

H.M. SHIP "BEAULIEU," OFF USHANT,
August 6th, 1801.

SIR,—

I beg leave to acquaint you that on the night of the 21st of July, Capt. Poyntz, having done me the honor of committing to my charge the Boats of H.M. Ship *Beaulieu*, mann'd with between eighty and ninety Officers and men (all Volunteers). About half past nine, we join'd those of H.M. Ships *Doris* and *Uranie*, about a mile Ahead of the former, where I received from Lieut. Losack the watch word and was desired to lay too on our Oars, it being much too soon for the Attack. About a quarter of an hour afterwards Lieut. Losack went in chase of a Shore Boat, leaving us still upon our Oars; but some time after perceiving no signs of his return, and dreading the danger of delay, from experience of the fruitless Attempt of the night before, being at least six miles from the scene of Action, and well knowing the time it would require to row that distance against a fresh

breeze, besides considering the increasing moon, it being the eleventh day of her Age. Convinced on that Account the delay of Another night would not only render the attempt more hazardous, but to a greater disadvantage, I took the liberty of giving way ahead with our own boats (which example the Others at length follow'd) intending, should it become necessary, to lay too nearer the entrance of the Bay, and there waited the return of the Commanding Officer, a Situation more eligible for the Successful Achievement of the enterprise. But on arrival off the Bay I found there was not a moment's time to be lost, the moon being just set, and nearly half an hour past midnight, and that the still continued Absence of Lieut. Losack had bred great discord Among the boats, most of them doubting in what manner to Act, whether to proceed or return to their Ships. I instantly assumed the command being the next Senior Officer, of which I inform'd all the Boats within hail, and to those astern who were laying too on their Oars, and seemingly in the Act of returning. I dispatched one of our own Boats to Acquaint them with my resolution, ordering them in the name of His Majesty's service immediately to follow the *Beaulieu* Boats, who were leading on to the charge, which I was happy to see promptly complied with. In a very few minutes we got sight of the Corvette which we were enabled to perceive at a good distance, the firmament being very clear although the moon was set, and she having the same advantage in respect to us, besides watchful, and as we find since, apprized of our Approach, were but too well prepared for our reception, as it proved, for on the instant of her hailing at the distance of four or five cables, She open'd a heavy fire of Musketry from every part of the Ship, Attended with showers of grape from the great guns ; small arms and field pieces from the Shore ; besides the surrounding batteries, in the face of which, the *Beaulieu's* Boats, in the most intrepid and Gallant manner, rushed on to the attack ; most nobly aided and assisted by those of the *Uranie* commanded by Lieut. Nevile, who, in the midst of the enemy's fire, I observed cheering and animating his men on to the charge, it is scarcely possible to say which Boat was Along-side first, as one spirit of determined resolution to conquer or die seemed to pervade the whole of *those* who continued to go on, for sorry am I to add some deserted us in the Moment of danger, the *Beaulieu's* Boats boarded on the starboard bow and

quarter, the *Uranie's* with one or two of the *Doris's*, and one of the last [named] on the Larboard bow, and after a very great Slaughter on both sides we happily succeeded in bringing the Corvette out of the Bay from under the fire of All the Surrounding batteries, during which time, viz. the space of above an hour and a half (it being little wind), a constant fire of musketry and pistols was kept up the hatchways and from the main deck ; About dawn of the Morning (half past two), being quite clear of the Batteries, we discover'd a number of boats coming from the direction of Brest ; suspected at first to be enemy's but, on nearer approach, found it to be Lieut. Losack and four other boats which were Absent during the Action and for nearly two hours afterwards. The *Beaulieu* Jolly Boat commanded by Mr. Worth (Midshipman) join'd at the same time, having been detained to bring the pilot in case of carrying the Corvette, but on his way thither, meeting Lieut. Losack, was order'd by him to retreat, the boats being all beaten off, and all lost as he inform'd him. Two of the Boats accompanied Lieut. Losack when he parted Company at ten O'clock, and was never seen untill the above specifd time, the Others in a more disgraceful manner fled from the Attack ; so that out of fifteen or sixteen boats that originally set out on this expedition, nine only, or ten at most, were present at Boarding, five of which I beg leave to observe (in justice to my brave shipmates, with whom I have had the honor of sailing four years and a half) belonged to the *Beaulieu*, not one of whom ever flinched. Indeed the Effects of their conduct speaks more forcibly in their behalf than any language I can possibly make use of ; for as the principal Bloodshed took place in the first ten minutes of storming the Ship, the French being arm'd at all points making the most desperate resistance, with every kind of arms, even boarding our boats, the loss sustain'd by the *Beaulieu* Boats alone, being ten kill'd and twenty one wounded, six of which very dangerously so, and at present at the Hospital, I hope is a sufficient proof of this determined bravery, and the active share they had in conquering the Vessel. I was seconded by Lieut. Posely and Lieut. Sinclair of the Marines, whose loss I have to lament Amongst the kill'd ; the Other Officers and Boats crews who were at Boarding behaved equally brave, but from the darkness of night, and the confusion of the scene, I was prevented from making the most accurate observation, yet in

justice to Lieut. Nevile, it was the first time I ever had the pleasure of meeting him, I could not help particularly observing his distinguished conduct throughout the whole of the business ; As also Mr. Brown, Boatswain, who having first Attempted the Cabin through the quarter Gallery, finding which too strongly barricaded, he fought his way to the forecastle, on clearing which, and cutting the cable, he began sheeting the Topsails home, Making sail, and the different necessary reports to the Quarter Deck, even in the middle of the contest, with as much coolness and regularity as on the forecastle of his own Ship the *Beaulieu*. Nor can I speak too highly of Mr. Finnis (Midshipman), but particularly of Mr. Philips, Master Mate of the *Beaulieu* and nephew to Capt. Poyntz, who was one of the very first of those who boarded on the bow, and even after having received some very bad wounds in fighting his way up the Ship's side, was Amongst the first Aloft cutting the sails loose, behaving throughout the whole in the most conspicuous manner, happy should I be to have it in my power to speak of the whole in these terms, as I assure you, Sir, it is with the utmost concern, I am under the necessity of condemning the Conduct of any of the Boats, particularly one, who, was conspicuously Busy in disconcerting the manœuvres of the other Boats, censuring the rashness and imprudence of the step I had taken in going on without Lieut. Losack ; and afterwards staining the lustre of this otherwise glorious achievement by a disgraceful retreat from the enemy's fire. I cannot but deeply feel and regret the loss of so many brave men kill'd and wounded, though my conscience feels easy as to that consequence, never having expected, A Man of war with Above three hundred men on board, prepared for defence, and on their guard, in the face Also of their grand fleet, and surrounded by Batteries, could be carried without bloodshed ; but had I suffer'd the golden Opportunity to have slipp'd, I should then indeed have felt at a loss to excuse myself to Capt. Brisbane (the regulator of the Expedition), to you, and my Country : I now beg leave to Apologise for having intruded on your time so long a detail of circumstances, but as they are facts, that every Officer and man present can bare testimony of, I was induced to be more minute than perhaps necessary, the better to remove impressions received by the first erroneous accounts, wishing also as much as possible to gain the *Beaulieu* Ship's Co. the credit

so much their due, she having as many boats and men present at the Attack as All the other Ships together.

I have the honor of subscribing myself, Sir, with the utmost respect,

Your Obedient Humble Servant,

KEITH MAXWELL.

Owing to the fact that he felt aggrieved that more credit had not been given to himself and his men in the first instance: this account was sent to the Admiral by Lieutenant Maxwell with a covering letter. This reads:—

H.M. SHIP “BEAULIEU,” OFF USHANT.

August 6th, 1801.

SIR,—

Reading yesterday the *Gazette* Account of the Capture of the Corvette *Le Chevette*, finding that the chief Merit is given to Lieut. Losack, who was not present at any part of the Action, and presuming that the Account I gave Captain Poyntz on the Morning of the 22nd of July for your information has not reach'd you, I take the liberty of enclosing a circumstantial detail, in justice to myself the Officers and Men who Alone were concern'd; Lieut. Losack and several other Boats, not joining untill nearly two hours After having possession of the Corvette and clear of Camaret Bay. But knowing him to be the Officer intended to Conduct the expedition, I consequently resign'd him the Command, only observing my satisfaction in delivering her up in so safe a situation.

KEITH MAXWELL.

In view of the allegations made by Lieutenant Maxwell against Lieutenant Losack, it was natural that Cornwallis should order an inquiry to be made into the latter's conduct. This officer's character was entirely vindicated, for part of the report of the inquiry stated:—

“We have examined the Officers of the different Ships employ'd on that Service, and most particularly the Officers of the *Doris's* Boat, in which Lieut. Losack was, and whether he went after the strange Boats from improper motives.

“And also in your Postscript to Lieutenant Maxwell; to examine how far Censure may be due to those in the Boats, whom he represented to have shewn reluctance in proceeding contrary to the Orders of the Officer whom they had been directed to obey; and whether it may be fair to charge the Officers and Men with Cowardice, who might have acted from strict principles of Duty.

“We are of opinion there cannot be the smallest Blame attached to the Conduct of Lieutenant Losack, or any of the Officers and Men in the Boats under his Command.

“And we feel it a duty incumbent on us to say we highly approve of Lieutenant Losack’s arrangement and Caution for the safety of the Boats and Men under his command; And his Absence at the moment of attack was Occasioned from his zeal to reconnoitre the supposed Boats of the Enemy in Shore.”

Captain Yorke, who commanded Losack’s ship, gave evidence as to character and bravery of Lieutenant Losack. He said:—

“During his Sailing under his Command, that since the Time he has known him, which is above four years, That had Captain Yorke been called upon to pick out from the Service, as far as he knows it, any Man to conduct an Enterprise where the greatest possible bravery was to be coupled with the greatest possible Coolness and Judgement in Order to insure Success, Lieutenant Losack is the Man he should have chosen on the occasion.”

The senior officers of the fleet were, of course, thrilled by the determined bravery which was displayed in this enterprise and were pleased with its success. At the same time it was natural for Cornwallis to regret that it should have been marred by any unpleasantness between two junior officers whose gallantry no one for a moment could have doubted. One reads this sentiment between the lines of the following letter which he addressed to Lieutenant Maxwell:—

I have received your letter this moment, relative to the Attack upon the *Chevette*, which happened I think seventeen days past. It would appear strange that in all this time no Communication should have come to me, if the Account you state is correct, that the Ship was brought out of the Bay and several Hours had elapsed before Lieutenant Losack and other Boats arrived.

Many Stories have been set about, and with others, that you have written to the Admiralty. Captain Brisbane had the direction of the Attack ; I saw him but for a few moments. He mentioned your having taken the opportunity of Lieutenant Losack's going to examine some Boats, to take the Command and push on, but that nothing had, upon his enquiry, appeared to the prejudice of Lieutenant Losack, though much ill wind had shewn itself towards him when he first made his appearance. Captain Brisbane's Boat's Crew who had been at the Attack talked in a very different Style alongside the *Ville de Paris*, by which it would appear the Battle was not over when Lieutenant Losack arrived, and I have not seen him since.

Lieutenant Losack was ordered to act with caution, and a Letter from me to that effect was sent by the *Uranie* to Captain Brisbane, who was desired to shew it to Lieutenant Losack, which could have arrived but a few Hours before the Attack.

It does not appear to me from the *Gazette* Account that the chief Credit is given to Lieutenant Losack. It would indeed be strange to give much more Credit to one than another, when so many must have shewn such determined bravery.

I have not the smallest doubt, Sir, but that you conducted yourself in the most gallant manner, but another Officer's Character is not to be blasted unless he has done wrong, and I must confess it would have been more becoming an Officer and a brave Man in an open manner to have brought forward his Charge at first, if any was to have been made.

You may however rest assured that any power given to me to reward shall not be abused ; but the strictest Justice shall be done to those who are, from an examination of all the circumstances, found most deserving.

W. CORNWALLIS.

In connection with this exploit Cornwallis wrote to St. Vincent, who, in his reply, said :—

“ The achievement announced in your obliging letter of the 24th certainly rivals, if it does not surpass, every enterprise of this or any previous war. I am much concerned at the loss of so many of the gallant men who were engaged in it.”

Subsequently, St. Vincent sent commissions to Cornwallis promoting both Lieutenants Losack and Maxwell. He evidently

had doubts in his mind as to Lieutenant Losack's share in the undertaking, for, in a private letter to Cornwallis on the subject, he said :—

“ I suspect from what I have seen in your public letter that some doubt arose in your mind in what manner to dispose of the Commission of Commander, from the circumstances of Capt. Losack not having actually assisted in the attack. I confess that I should have had the same sort of feeling about it, but considering that Capt. Losack had an important share in the arrangement of the plan, and was performing what he thought a very essential Service in ensuring its execution I do not see how the Commission could well be disposed of otherwise.

“ Capt. Brisbane, I observe, mentions that the first Lieutenant of the *Beaulieu* had considerable merit in the attack of the *Chevrette* and carried the orders of Capt. Losack into execution with great spirit and precision. I understand his name is Maxwell : Should you have formed the same opinion of the services of this officer, and are desirous of awarding them, I have enclosed a blank Commission for that purpose, but you will understand that I leave it wholly and entirely to you to fill it up in his favor, or to return it, which ever may be most agreeable to you, having no other meaning than to put it in your power to extend the reward for the gallant Service performed, beyond the original limits, if you like to do so, and the more strongly to mark my attention to you.”

Peace was now in the air, and the letter goes on to say :—

“ I am sorry that the state of the Enemy's preparations at Brest has rendered it a matter of absolute necessity to keep you so long at Sea, the Board will however have it in its power to reinforce you immediately and enable you, if you judge fit, to send in some of your Ships to refresh. You will have heard by the public Prints and by other communications that the negotiation with France draws to a conclusion, and from the best opinion I can form the public is correct, so far, in its judgement, that the great question must shortly be decided, but whether by a cessation of hostilities or by a termination of all negotiation it is beyond the reach of my foresight to determine, the moment I can clearly see my way I shall communicate my opinion thereupon to you.”

An account of a gallant action fought by Captain Dashwood

of the Sloop *Sylph* with an enemy frigate twice her own size and armament is also worthy of record. The following is Dashwood's report to Cornwallis :—

SIR,—

I have the Honor of acquainting you that, being off St. Anders with His Majesty's Sloop under my direction, in obedience to my orders, I last Evening gave Chase to an Armed Schooner then standing to the N.E., but before there was a possibility of arriving up with her, a Large Frigate was discovered close under the land, standing towards us, to whom the Schooner fled for refuge. . . .

Unwilling to quit the Station you assigned me, I stood towards them ; but as the Night approached, and observing them to be undismayed by the appearance of the *Sylph*, with no possibility of gaining the Wind (for they were directly in the wind's eye) at a little after sunset, I shortened sail, hove too and prepared for battle, there to wait the result. At this time the Hull of the Frigate was clearly discernible. The light Airs from the Southward did not permit her to arrive up till Eleven o'clock, which period, from her not answering the private Signal, and being within half Gun shot, I gave directions to commence the Action ; The Enemy bearing down in a silent and most masterly manner, instantly returned it, and soon closed to within that of a Pistol. At this distance, and being precisely abreast of each other, the battle continued with equal vigour for one hour and twenty Minutes ; when, finding the Sails Standing, and almost all the running rigging cut to pieces, one Gun dismounted, several shot between Wind and Water, and the Brig in an unmanageable state, I conceived it most advisable to edge away a little to repair the damages we had sustained. I was the more inclined to act thus, not from any advantage which the Enemy had over us, but from his position, which was admirably calculated for boarding, and what I was naturally anxious to avoid. I soon however perceived that he was not in a situation even to follow us ; I consequently hove too, and the remaining part of the Night we were busily employed in putting the *Sylph* in a situation to maintain her Station. Soon after the firing ceased, the Wind shifted in a violent Squall to the N.W., which reduced us to treble reef Top Sails, when we lost sight of the Enemy. . . .

At day light however he was again discovered about Six or Seven miles a head and to windward, with his Fore Yard on deck and otherwise damaged, not having any head sail set, but his Fore top Mast Staysail . . . finding her in this situation, I conceived it my duty to endeavour to renew the Action, and therefore made all possible sail, bearing occasionally (for I dare not venture to tack) for the purpose ; but before I could accomplish it, the Enemy, having swazed up his Fore Yard, at 7 o'clock wore and made all Sail for the Land. . . . The Wind having increased since the Morning, with every appearance of its continuing, and a rising Sea ; the Main Mast severely wounded, with the momentary expectation of its going over the side, the Sloop making a foot and a half Water an hour, together with the Enemy's great superiority, having fourteen ports of a side on her Main deck, exclusive of the bridle, and evidently carrying thirty six or thirty eight guns, I found it impossible to follow him with the most distant hope of success, and accordingly hove and stood to the Northward ; which, under the existing circumstances, I trust will meet with your approbation.

I beg permission to remark that altho' the British Colours were kept flying from the dawn of day to the Moment of the Enemy's bearing and standing to the Southward, yet he studiously avoided showing his ; I am therefore at a loss to know, whether she was a French or Spanish Frigate, though I am inclined to think from various circumstances she belongs to France.

Although I lament exceedingly the loss of one Man killed and Nine wounded, three of whom I fear are dangerously so, yet it is a consolation to reflect that more mischief was not done, considering the situation of the two ships, which can only be attributed to their unceasing exertions to disable us.

It subsequently transpired that the *Sylph's* antagonist was the French Frigate *Artèmire*, whose Captain was placed under arrest for his conduct upon this occasion. Sometime later the *Sylph* again met and beat her.

There is another account of how the boats of the *Fisgard*, *Diamond* and *Boadicea* attacked and brought out of Corunna harbour a new Spanish sloop of war—the *Neptuna*—and two other smaller armed vessels. The report of the undertaking states that

these “were moored within the strong batteries that protect the Port, and so near them that the sentinels on the ramparts challenged our people and immediately commenced a heavy fire.” There are several other accounts of exploits of a similar nature, each one proves the intrepid bravery of all concerned in them, and gives an example of the magnificent spirit of the Navy.

In June 1847, thirty-two years after its conclusion, a naval committee sat to consider the giving of gold medals for various conspicuously gallant actions in this war. The “cutting out” of the *Chevrette* was included. Let us hope some of those brave men were alive to receive these medals, the issue of which was still further delayed two years. From inquiries made at the Admiralty it does not, however, appear that either Losack or Maxwell survived the war.

CHAPTER III

1801

It will be remembered how in August of this year Nelson had been entrusted with the task of endeavouring to destroy the flotilla of boats which had been collected at Boulogne to carry troops for the invasion of England. The attempt was unsuccessful. Writing on the subject to Cornwallis in a letter dated August 31st from Greenwich, Lord Hood said :—

“My friend Nelson, at his last attack at Boulogne, appears to have taken the bull by the horns, and to have sacrificed a great number of lives without an adequate object, for the bringing off a few gunboats could not be one, for they could be replaced within a fortnight. This, I am told, is generally said in town, where I go very seldom.

“His Lordship since that has made no other attempt, which I suppose may be recommended to him, so as not to irritate ; at the moment a favourable dispatch was expected from Bonaparte respecting peace, which is not yet come ; but I think a few days must determine whether the sword is to be sheathed or war continued.”

However little damage Nelson may have effected by his attack, it evidently annoyed Bonaparte, as in a letter from a secret service agent to Cornwallis there is a passage :—

“Our attack on Boulogne has put the First Consul so much out of humour that nobody dares to open their lips on the subject. It has therefore been impossible for me to ascertain what damage has been really done to the armament at that Port.”

Hood's views as to the wisdom of a strict blockade are also of interest ; the letter concludes by saying :—

“My fears are we shall have no peace but such a one as I shall view as a very serious misfortune instead of a blessing until you have beaten the combined fleet at Brest. Therefore cease

blocking the port, and tempt it out. I have ever held that opinion, and am persuaded the war has been prolonged by the blockade. A temporary one, under particular circumstances, may not only be prudent but perfectly wise ; but a perpetual one must bear us down, which the French know as well as we, and that I conceive will make against a good peace.”

In connection with the constant fear of invasion which existed in the minds of everyone in those days, the following impression written by a secret service agent from France is worthy of record. The original is in French :—

“People always seem afraid in England of an invasion ; people cannot imagine that the great activity which exists in the ports of France, the immense preparations which have taken place since a long time could have any other purpose. This is an error all the more deplorable as it serves the views of the French Government to perfection ; which congratulates itself at seeing the English pay special attention to their coasts ; whilst the Fleet at Brest will sail with the first favourable wind to get into the Mediterranean and come to the help of Egypt. Let there be no illusion over this enterprise. There is reason to fear its success—so much more as this Fleet, when it will have joined Gantheaume, will have picked up the small squadrons which have preceded it and which await it in the ports of Sicily ; this Fleet, I say, will be very formidable itself. What is more—it will find on its way only friendly ports. Those in Spain are put at the disposal of the Republic and those in Portugal will have to submit.”

Before dealing with the period immediately before the armistice and final signing of peace, the author feels he must publish the following inimitable letter from a man whose apprentice had fallen a victim to a pressgang. It can only be compared to an effusion written by an Indian baboo. It was addressed to the Admiralty and passed on to Cornwallis for him to act upon :—

MY LORDS,—

It is with Unspeakable Reverence I beg leave to Approach Your Lordships' Presence with the Case of my Apprentice George Tomlinson, who did about October in the Year 1800 Absent Himself from my Service, went down to Liverpool, and by some means I believe got Impress'd and put on Board the *Acteon*

Frigate and is now put on Board His Majesty's Ship *Vengeance* now lying at Spithead or Else Where.

Thus, My Lords, having related before Your Lordships the Nature and Disagreeable Situation of this Unfortunate Young Man, I have nothing more to add but to Crave that Your Lordships' Distinguishing Goodness would be pleased to Condescend to take into Your Kind Consideration the Case of this Unhappy Young Man to the End and Purpose he may obtain his Discharge and return to My Service again, and for such an Act of Your Lordships Meritorious Goodness towards me Your Humble Petitioner would always have the same in thankfull Remembrance and ever be Proud to Acknowledge Himself to be Your Lordships' very humble, most obedient and devoted servant,

WILLIAM JACKSON.

To further emphasize his request, he added a postscript :—

“ My Lords, a few words in reply as Early as possible would be Exceeding thankfully receiv'd by Your Lordships Humble Petitioner. Please direct Wm. Jackson, Culcheth, in the Parish of Newton, to the Care of William Booth, the Three Crowns, Newton Heath, Near Manchester.”

On October 1st an armistice was agreed upon, and St. Vincent immediately wrote to Cornwallis apprising him of the fact :—

“ The preliminaries of peace were signed last night, and I have infinite satisfaction in acquainting you that your brother, the Marquis, will negotiate the definitive treaty. The moment the preliminaries are exchanged, you will receive directions for the disposal of the fleet. Torbay, a port in Ireland, and Cawsand Bay will probably be the principal points until the definitive treaty is signed, which I will thank you to keep to yourself.”

The French Admiral at Brest, Villaret-Joyeuse, an old antagonist of Cornwallis's, confirmed the news, and sent him a very polite letter under a flag of truce announcing the fact :—

MONSIEUR L'AMIRAL,—

Le Ministre de la Marine me charge de vous annoncer l'échange des ratifications avec l'Angleterre et la cessation des hostilités, il m'ordonne en conséquence de considérer et traiter comme amis tous les Bâtiments de votre nation.

Recevez, Monsieur l'Amiral, mon sincère compliment sur cette heureux issue des démêlés de nos gouvernement, qui, mettant

Liberté

Egalité



Dépêche Télégraphique

Du 13 Vend.^g

An 10 de la République Française,

une en indivisible.

La Paix a été signée à Londres le 9
Vendémiaire

Pour copie conforme
Ed. Philippe

fin à vos glorieux travaux, va vous rendre à vos affections et à vos amis. Agréez la parfaite estime et la haute considération avec laquelle. J'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

VILLARET-JOYEUSE.

In order that there could be no doubt about the matter, the French Admiral also sent with the letter the original telegram he had received from Paris announcing the fact. It is probably one of the first telegraph forms ever used, and for this reason is reproduced. In the original the paper is sky-blue.

What was very remarkable was the way in which Pellew heard of the Armistice some three weeks after it had been signed. An English frigate had run ashore off the French coast near Rochefort. At dawn of the following day, when she was still aground, she saw a French frigate bearing down upon her, and, although in a hopeless position, was prepared to fight it out. Much to her Commander's astonishment, the Frenchman ran up a flag of truce, and sent out boats, whose officer informed the British that an armistice had been declared, that they had not come out to fight them, but to help to get their ship off; which they proceeded to do!

Pellew, when this was reported to him, at once wrote, on October 21st, to the French Naval Commander at Rochefort:—

SIR,—

I embrace with eagerness the opportunity you have offered me of expressing my thankfulness for the early communication you have been pleased to make, that the Preliminary Articles of Peace were signed in London on the 1st instant. The promptitude with which you have conveyed this pleasing information is to me the most convincing Proof that personally you feel every inclination to restore that Friendly and Polite intercourse between the Individuals of our respective Nations which has been so long interrupted.

I entreat of you to give me credit for the same Friendly dispositions, and permit me in the name of my Government (to whom I have sent a report of your Civility) to express my thanks for the effectual Assistance you offered, by Captain Willaume, to one of His Majesty's Frigates aground on your Coast, a report of which was faithfully made to me by her commander.

I presume the continuance of Strong Westerly Winds have prevented my receiving any Orders from my Government ; but I beg you to be assured that no interruption whatever will be given to the Commerce on this Coast or any thing offensive be committed by the Squadron under my Command.

One wonders whether any of these officers, French and English, suspected how short a time peace would last, and that within little more than a year they would all be in exactly the same positions !

Cornwallis now proceeded to Torbay with his fleet. Certain ships, including the *Ville de Paris*, required repairs, so he shifted his flag to the *Belleisle*, taking with him his devoted Flag-Captain Whitby. A few frigates were left off the French coast to watch and report. Early in November the Admiral received more compliments from St. Vincent, who wrote on the 3rd :—

“I have derived the highest degree of satisfaction from your obliging letter of the 1st, and shall always consider your having been placed at the head of the Channel fleet as an event of the greatest importance to the country at large, and of the most solid comfort to me.”

Marquis Cornwallis, who was still conducting the peace negotiations in Paris, wrote from there on the 10th :—

“I this morning received your letter dated the 1st from Torbay, and am happy to find that you had got into port before the deadful gales of the 2nd and 4th. I have long considered peace to be necessary for the preservation of our country, and I did not therefore feel myself at liberty to refuse the mission when it was pressed upon me, although nothing could be more disagreeable to me.

“Admiral de Bruix, with whom I dined at Talleyrand’s, spoke of your conduct off Belleisle in the highest terms, and added that, although he felt mortified at being deprived of a victory which he considered as certain, he had some satisfaction in seeing you obtain the success which your conduct so truly deserved.

“Should a dissolution take place, of which I know nothing but report, I hope you will again represent the borough of Eye.”

The action to which the French Admiral referred was, of course, Cornwallis’s retreat six years before.

CHAPTER IV

1801-1802

THE spirit of unrest was abroad amongst the seamen of the Channel Fleet soon after the armistice. It was difficult for comparatively uneducated men to appreciate the difference between a mutual cessation of hostilities and actual peace. It must be remembered that at this period a very large percentage of seamen were employed on board ship against their will. They had been impressed, and the pressgangs made no discrimination of any kind. If a man looked healthy and strong he was taken, no matter whether he was married or single, or what his occupation was. Consequently, it is not surprising that however willing men may have been to serve their country in time of war, it was quite a different matter retaining them on board ship in what they considered to be a time of peace. Although the plenipotentiaries between France and Great Britain were discussing terms the last three months of 1801, the Peace of Amiens was not actually signed until March of the following year.

The previous month disquieting rumours of discontent had reached the ears of Cornwallis. An incipient mutiny had been quelled by Whitby in the *Belleisle*, the temporary flag-ship. These events prompted the Admiral to circulate privately the following order among the Captains of the Channel Fleet :—

“Some unpleasant reports having reached the Commander in Chief that in a private way he directs that the Captains do pay a particular attention at the present crisis, and that any expression tending to obstruct the service be immediately brought Home to the offender.

“The Captains are privately to admonish the officers as to their conversation in regard to the Service, and that they are by shewing a proper contempt for their own private convenience to

set an example of duty to the men at a time when the interest of the country so much depends upon their good behaviour.

“Only a few of the officers are to be allowed to be absent for two or three hours in the day time.

“The ships are to be constantly ready for Service—and the Captains and Officers are to consider themselves at all times answerable for the performance of it.”

In December of this year the climax was reached. Half the Channel Fleet was at Berehaven under the command of Sir Andrew Mitchell. Rear-Admiral Campbell's squadron formed part of his command. It was in this squadron that the mutiny broke out. This mutiny, although serious, did not spread to anything like the same extent as did the mutiny at Spithead and the Nore in 1797. It started in the *Temeraire*, Admiral Campbell's flag-ship, commanded by Captain Eyles. Trouble arose at the same time on board the *Formidable*, *Majestic* and *Vengeance*, all of which ships belonged to Admiral Campbell's division. The crews of the two last-named ships appear to have “sat on the fence” to await the result of what might happen on board the others. The following is Captain Eyles's full narrative of the affair :—

A Boat from His Majesty's Ship *Formidable*, with an Officer on Service, came on Board this Ship at about eleven O'Clock on the 3rd Dec^r 1801 that is about five minutes afterwards, I went upon Deck to receive Captain Duff, when I perceived a Body of Men collecting fast on the Forecastle. The Officer of the Watch (L^t Gore) said, I believe there is something going on amongst the People. I replied, I thought so too. When I was going to announce Captain Duff to the Admiral, he (L^t Gore) said they are coming aft. I answered I would be up instantly, and took this Opportunity when below to name the Circumstances to the Admiral. I then went on Deck, when I saw the Major Part of the Ship's Crew (of Seamen) speaking to Lieutenant Douglas, first Lieutenant, and the Officer of the Watch. I requested to know what they were come aft for, and what it was they wanted. Alexander Bruce, Quarter Master, John Snowden, Gunner's Mate, and James Ward, Captain of the Forecastle, appeared before the Body of the Men, saying, they were called on Deck, and hustled aft by them to say, the Ship's Company wanted to know when the

Ship was going, and that they would not start an Anchor but to go to England. I said I did not know where She was going, but that I expected any Orders would be obeyed as usual and desired they would go quietly below again.

I now observed the Admiral was coming on Deck, when he requested me to inform him what was the Matter. I said that they (viz. the Crew) wanted to know where the Ship was going. When he asked them, Did You ever know where you was going or make a Request of this Sort before? they said No, but it is now Peace. When he replied We do not know it is Peace, nor can I tell You where we are going. When He as well as myself ordered them quietly below, which was done.

I now asked Lieutⁿ Tucker of the *Formidable* if anything of this Kind had taken Place on Board that Ship. He said there had been Men aft to speak to the Captain, to ask where she was going.

On Sunday the 6th of December, 1801, after the Sails were bent, agreeable to the Rear Admiral's Orders, the Major Part of the Ship's Company of this Ship were heard cheering on the lower Deck, between One and Two O'Clock; they lowered the Ports and were in the Act of barring them in, and attempted to unship the Ladders, when Lieutenants Douglas, Brown and the rest of the Officers immediately went amongst them, when they exclaimed, We will fight for our King and Country, but not start an Anchor except for England. The Hands were then turned up, but it was some Time before they came aft, except a small Part of the Crew which were on the middle Deck, and they came aft quietly immediately they were called. Soon after upon the first Lieutⁿ telling the People below, it was the Admiral's Wish they should come on Deck, they said they had been aft, and wanted to go to England, but came up very slowly. . . . On the Admiral asking them what was the Cause of their making that Disturbance below, their Answer was, they understood that the Squadron going to Sea, was bound to the West Indies, and that it was the Ship's Company's Determination not to start an Anchor but for England. The Admiral then said it was impossible to tell them where they were going, and asked them if at any former Period they were ever told where they were going; they said No, but still persisted in what they had before said, relative to not starting the Anchor. I then asked them if they could state any Grievance,

and if the greatest Attention was not always paid to their Comforts in every Respect. They replied, "Grievances we have none, in that we are all well satisfied." The Admiral then pointed out to them that we could not yet call it Peace, that our Service was still required, and that the Time was near at Hand for our going to Sea. And that he expected they would readily unmoor the Ships (or Words to that effect) and made Use of other language to enforce Obedience, when they instantly cried out: "No—No—No—we will go to England." They were then ordered quietly below, which was stated in a Letter to Vice-Admiral Sir Andrew Mitchell, K.B., by Rear-Admiral Campbell.

A Number of very unpleasant Reports were told me and the Admiral on Monday and Tuesday, and on Wednesday Evening, a little before Eight O'Clock, a Letter was shoved thro' the Lattice of the Admiral's Steward's Pantry, signed 'Temeraires', with which the Admiral waited on Sir Andrew Mitchell, K.B., the following Morning, and returned about Twelve O'Clock, when the Hands were turned up. The Admiral then read the Letter to the Ship's Company, which was as follows: Viz. :—

" TO REAR-ADMIRAL CAMPBELL.

" SIR,—

"We beg leave to supplicate your Honor to accept these few Lines, which is to inform You of the Sentiments of our Minds. One and all, that it is not our Inclinations to hurt any Person in the Ship, nor to use any Violence whatever although we are under the disagreeable Necessity at this Time of objecting those Orders You might have received from the Board of Admiralty. Our reasons are, Sir, We know it was a Peace prior to our leaving England, and Hostilities ceased with all Nations, which has since been confirmed by many uncontrovertable Proofs, and we here beg to call to your Memory the Words you desired to be circulated round the Ship, on the third Day of Oct^r last, by your own Coxswain. We hope, Sir, You will take this Case into Consideration, knowing that we have most of us served our King and Country with the greatest Alacrity from Seven to Nine Years. It has pleased God to bless our Country with a Peace, we therefore expect the Indulgence of free born Britons of enjoying the Blessings arising from the same. We

therefore both Seamen and Marines conclude with a final Determination not to weigh an Anchor except for England, and

“ We are, Sir,

“ His Majestys Faithful and loyal Subjects,

“ THE TEMERAIRE’S.

“ P.S.—We wait with the greatest Impatience for your final Answer.

“ H.M. SHIP, ‘ Temeraire,’ Dec^r 7th, 1801.”

After which the Admiral expiated on the Impropriety of their Behaviour, and told them he had laid the whole of their Conduct before the Commander in Chief, and that he, as well as himself, thought they had been very premature, as the Hands had not been called to unmoor at the same Time, took great Pains to explain the Meaning of the Word Premature, and told them to be very cautious and circumspect in their Conduct, and do their Duty as usual (or Words to that Effect, the Admiral speaking, and telling the Marines they were included in the Letter, and asked them if they knew anything of it; to which no Answer was given; the Ship’s Company then went below quietly).

In the Evening about five O’Clock Lieutenant Pogson reported to me in the Admiral’s Cabin that Ja^s M^cAvoy, one of the Marines, was drunk, and very insolent to Lieutenant Williams and a Corporal. I then went on Deck, and ordered him in Irons. About a Quarter after five Mr King (Masters Mate), when going the Rounds, observed John Pilcher, John Fitzgerald, and James Lockyer running from the larboard Bay up the fore Ladder calling out Jack, and returned again instantly in the same Hurry. Mr. King, knowing them to be suspicious Characters, and that a Man had just been put in Irons, supposed there was something going on, and reported the same to Lieutⁿ Pogson, who immediately went with him on the middle Deck and up the fore Ladder, When they found a Mob collected under the Forecastle. Mr. King again came up, and reported the same to Lieutenant Welsh, who sent him to Captain Vallack to order the Marines under Arms, at the same Time desired him to acquaint me of it, as Lieutⁿ Welsh did not think it proper to leave the Deck at that Crisis. Mr. King then came into the Admiral’s Cabin, and said the Men were beginning a Disturbance again; The Admiral as well as myself and the Officers went immediately on Deck; by this Time a Guard was

collecting under Arms. Lieutⁿ Pogson, Officer of the Watch' informed me the People were going to cobb a Man under the Forecastle, and that he had been to say he would not suffer anything of that Sort to take Place in his Watch ; they persisted in doing it, and when he had seized two Men to bring them aft, he was hustled, and the Men rescued by the Mob, they saying, there should be no Prisoners, no Punishment. The People then called all Hands on Deck, and cheer'd on the Forecastle. I instantly went forward, and asked them what they wanted (it was about Dusk), a general Cry was heard, "There is a Man in Irons." I said, Yes there is, and there he shall remain. Their Answer was, "We will have him out, no Prisoners," and cheer'd again, saying "We will have him out, we will punish him ourselves." I then seized a Man, believing him to be one of those who cheered, to bring him aft, desiring the People to make a Lane. They open'd a little, which gave me an Opportunity of seeing the Admiral coming forward with the Officers, but they, again cheering, immediately surrounded and began to hustle me ; John Collins, the Butcher, closed and pushed me about, holding up his Arm, and preventing me going aft with the Man I had seized ; When Mr. Douglass, the Boatswain, threw his Hand across Collin's Breast, saying, You damned Rascal, do you know who You are touching of ? (Or words to that Effect), the Man was passed aft, and I remained with the Admiral and some of the Officers on the Forecastle. By this Time all the Marines were under Arms on the Quarter Deck and Poop. The Admiral then seized James Lockyer on the Forecastle and brought him aft under the Poop. He again came forward and began successively to call out the Men pointed out by me, and the other Officers as most suspected, when every Officer conducted them aft, as they were called out. The Admiral then sent Lieutenant Mackenzie to the Commander in Chief to inform him of the Circumstance. The Admiral, Captain Vallack, and Lieutⁿ Welsh, as well as myself, went aft and spoke to the Marines, saying, we trusted they would do their Duty ; when they answered they would. Lieut. Garrick, Mr. Charlton and the Carpenter were ordered to lay the Gratings on Fore and Aft, which was done.

Leaving the Quarter Deck in Charge of Lieutenant Douglas (first Lieutenant) the Marines were brought forward on each Gangway with the Officer in Front, forced the People over the

Bows, some of them getting in at the Head Doors, main, and middle Deck Ports, and the starboard Gangway Ladder, and some of them overboard.

Supposing they were gone below to assemble in the Bay, leaving a Guard on the Quarter Deck—The Admiral, myself, and Captain Vallack, with the Marines, proceeded to the Bay on the lower Deck, finding nobody there, we went round the middle Deck, where there were a few Men, which we sent up, after coming on Deck again, placing Guards on the main Deck, Quarter Deck, and Ladders ; The Admiral then called aft several more Men, who were pointed out to him by myself and the Officers as most suspected, and sent them under Guard to the *Windsor Castle*. All Hands were then called, and ordered to assemble on the Booms, when James McAvoy (the Prisoner) was punished with three Dozen Lashes, at the Quarter Deck Netting abreast of the Main Rigging, and then put in Charge of a Sentry.

Part of the Quarter Masters, all the Boatswain's Mates, some of the Bargemen, with a few Men and Boys went aft on the Poop, some of them at the Beginning, but Andrew Bruce, Quarter Master, and John Snowden, Gunner's Mate (particularly), came aft at first, and offer'd their Service, saying to Lieutenant Welsh they were ready to do anything they were ordered : Arms were then put into their Hands, and some Others. After the Admiral taking every Means of explaining to the Men the Impropriety of their Conduct on the Quarter Deck, I at the same Time endeavouring to explain to those on the fore Part of the Booms that they had been premature, how very wrong they had acted, after what they had heard to Day as they had not been called on to unmoor.

After waiting some Time everybody was sent aft, when the Admiral addressed them saying : *Temeraires* if you will promise me to be quiet, orderly and attentive, I will allow you to go to your Hammocks ; If not you shall remain up till Day Light, and to Day Light again. When in a general Voice they answered, "We will—we will"—they were allowed to go below, and the Watch was called. The Officers were then put to Watch, and Watch armed, and the Marines also armed, and the Watch below were ordered not to undress.

THO. EYLES.

"*TEMERAIRE*," BEARHAVEN [old spelling].

THE 11th December, 1801.

The crew of the *Formidable* also notified their Captain that they would refuse to weigh anchor, should that order be given, unless they were assured of being sent home to England. Cornwallis and the Admiralty were immediately apprised of the state of affairs. On December 15th the latter wrote direct to Sir Andrew Mitchell (at the same time sending a copy of their letter to Cornwallis). In it they give direct orders that the mutiny was to be suppressed and that Rear-Admiral Campbell was to proceed to sea with those ships in which disaffection existed. In the event, however, of the mutiny spreading to the rest of the Fleet at Berehaven, then the whole was to return to Spithead and the Nore; in other words, they put it upon the officers to deal with their own men. Fortunately they were able to, owing to the steadfastness of the Marines on board the ships of the Fleet.

Declarations of loyalty from the various detachments of that Corps were sent to the Captains of their respective ships. The following is an example; it was addressed to Captain Forshall, the Marine officer of the *Resolution* :—

SIR,—

We hope you'll excuse the liberty we take in addressing you, but as we understand that certain Ships Companies have refused obeying the just Commands of their Superior Officers in different respects, and knowing as we do the dreadful Consequences that formerly attended such like proceedings, which was so prejudicial to that regularity which is so highly necessary to promote good Order. For our part we abhor the Idea and are determined to support and maintain the Officers in any Point which they may think proper.

We hope you'll Inform Capt. Gardner and the Admiral of our determination, as we think it highly incumbent on us to act in such a manner, as may best promote the welfare of *our King* and Country.

I have the honor of subscribing Myself and in behalf of the detachment of Marines,

Your most obedient, humble servant,

WM. HEARNS, Sergt.

Cornwallis received orders to proceed at once from Torbay to Berehaven in the *Ville de Paris*, which ship was once more

ready for sea. By the time he arrived the mutiny was suppressed and the ringleaders arrested, and he returned with the fleet to Spithead. In their letter ordering this course of action, the Admiralty suspended the order for the ships in which the mutiny had occurred to proceed on foreign service. They left it to Cornwallis to decide whether or not it would be advisable to bring them to Spithead, as they considered "That in the event of the conviction of the persons brought to trial the punishment would have a proper effect upon the crews," and stated that in their opinion "the most prompt and speedy execution of justice in all such cases must be productive of the best results." They also complimented him upon the steps he had taken generally to deal with unrest in the Fleet, and instructed him to "convey in a suitable manner their Lordships' appreciation" of the conduct of the Marines.

Cornwallis did not send the ships in question on foreign service. He sailed immediately for Portsmouth with the whole Fleet. The ringleaders were duly tried, convicted, and sentenced to pay the extreme penalty by hanging. In a letter written to the ship's Chaplain requesting his attendance after their conviction, the mutineers said:—

"The state we are now in is of the most serious nature, our bodies not only being in danger, but our unprepared souls; therefore we humbly implore your assistance on this unfortunate occasion."

The following is taken from the *Naval Chronicle* of 1802:—

"On Jan. 15.—The Yellow flags, the usual signals for punishment, were hoisted on board the *Temeraire*, *Formidable* and *Majestic*, and the prisoners convicted by the Court Martial, and sentenced to die, were brought out to suffer. They appeared at the platform erected at the bows of the respective ships, deporting themselves with all that apparent contrition and resignation which became them at a moment so awful. Their conduct during the whole period of their confinement had evinced the most perfect resignation to their fate, and consciousness that their offence had merited it."

One of the men who had obtained leave to address his fellow-seamen before execution said: "I hope the ship's company, as well as all the spectators present, will take warning by my example. It is impossible for seamen to succeed in any attempt to mutiny.

Sailors never did, nor ever would, stick to each other on such an occasion. Those who attempt to violate the laws of the land or naval discipline must inevitably expect to meet with the same disgraceful end I am going to suffer. I acknowledge the justice of my sentence, and forgive all parties concerned against me. I have made my peace with God, and am ready to die." The account concludes by saying :—

"After continuing a short time in prayer, a gun was fired as the fatal signal of death, and the wretched men were launched into eternity."

Thus ended the mutiny at Berehaven. All things considered, while deprecating acts of mutiny, it is impossible not to have a certain amount of sympathy with the ships' crews, many of whom, as the Captain of the *Formidable* testified in his report, had not seen their families for nine years !

Peace was still hanging in the balance, and the Channel Fleet was kept prepared to sail at the shortest notice. No one trusted Napoleon, who had taken the opportunity during the armistice to dispatch part of the Brest Fleet to the West Indies. This in itself excited suspicion. No leave was allowed except in the case of the death of a near relation. Certain unfit men were, however, discharged mostly scorbutic, but, in the case of one ship, out of forty-five, five were hectic (whatever that meant) and four were idiots !

Peace was signed at last on March 27th, and on April 1st a general demobilization was ordered. Cornwallis superintended this himself, for on April 20th St. Vincent wrote him, saying :—

"I heartily hope you will soon be relieved from the irksome details of the Squadron in Torbay. With many thanks for your steady perseverance to the end."

Before finally taking leave of the Fleet he conveyed to all the thanks he had received for himself, his officers, and ships' companies from both Houses of Parliament for their splendid services.

On April 28th he arrived at Newlands, to which considerable additions had been made. The main part, however, was still the old thatched farm-house. Owing to the carelessness of a servant the place was partly burnt in the winter of this year. It happened on a Sunday during morning service when the Admiral was away. The vicar of Milford was in the middle of

his sermon. The conflagration could be seen through the north windows of the church, and one by one the congregation began to file out, until the preacher was left alone with the verger, whom he asked what was the matter. When told that Newlands was ablaze he left the pulpit, and he and his verger and the whole population of the village streamed across the fields to render assistance, but it was to no purpose, the old wing was entirely destroyed. Cornwallis lost a valuable library of books and many of the treasures he had brought back from India.

In July of this year he was returned to Parliament for his former constituency, the Eye division of Suffolk. His brother, Marquis Cornwallis, writing to his old friend, Colonel Ross [his subsequent biographer], on the result of the election, said :—

“ The Admiral got very drunk at the election, and the next day insisted upon my steward taking £500 towards defraying the expenses. Without having given a vote in the H. of C. for many years past, and perhaps never intending to give one again, no youth of one-and-twenty was ever more pleased at coming into Parliament. What unaccountable creatures we are ! ”

SIXTH PHASE

1803—1819

THE SECOND BLOCKADE OF BREST:
AND FINAL RETIREMENT



MRS. JOHN WHITBY, AGED 21.

From a painting by J. Hoppner, R.A., in the possession of the author.

CHAPTER I

1803

EARLY in the year 1803 Cornwallis was at Newlands. His friend Whitby, who had married the previous summer, was with him, as was also Mrs. Whitby.

No biography of the Admiral would be complete without the fullest reference to this lady, who played so important a part in the closing stages of his life. She was the daughter of Captain Thomas Symonds, who was himself a friend of, and had been a shipmate with, both Cornwallis and St. Vincent. Her brother also joined the Navy, became an Admiral, and as Sir William Symonds was one of the most distinguished naval designers ever employed at the Admiralty.

Born in 1783, Theresa Symonds was but nineteen at the time of her marriage. She was both cultured and beautiful, spoke three languages and painted exquisitely. From the very first the Admiral became deeply attached to her. It was suggested by some of his family after her husband's death, that his affection was more than fatherly and platonic. This is highly improbable; he was forty years older than she was, and even if the suggestion were true he certainly never allowed his feelings to get the better of him, as in not one of the innumerable letters which passed between them, and which are now in the author's possession, is there the faintest hint at anything more than a profound mutual respect and affection. She adored her husband, and he her. The Admiral treated them both as his children. Newlands was being rebuilt, as the "Strawberry Hill Gothic" edifice which now stands, and, when Cornwallis was once more called upon to hoist his flag as Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet in May of this year, it was Mrs. Whitby who superintended the work; laid out the grounds and plantations and managed the entire property. The Admiral vested her with his power-of-attorney, and by judicious purchases she added considerably to the extent

and value of the estate. A remarkable performance for a woman who was only in her twenty-first year !

The ink on the Treaty of Amiens was scarcely dry before war broke out afresh between the French, or it would perhaps be more correct to say between Napoleon, and the English. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were not finally broken until May 1803, but what had happened in Paris the previous month prepared the British Government for all eventualities. Anticipating hostilities, Cornwallis had as early as March offered his services to the Admiralty. St. Vincent, who was still First Lord, replied :—

“Many thanks for your frank and manly declarations.”

The Admiral was once more given command of the Channel Fleet and instructed to proceed immediately to Plymouth to take up his appointment. In a covering letter St. Vincent told him how the sloop *Acasta* had been sent to Yarmouth (Isle of Wight) to pick up him and his baggage, and concluded heartily wishing him “all possible honour and prosperity.”

The Admiral hoisted his flag on board the *Dreadnought* at Plymouth on May 10th. The Fleet in the meanwhile had been reduced to a peace establishment. The ships had to be victualled for a long period and their crews brought up to war strength. Pressgangs were employed without mercy. But the men of Plymouth and the neighbourhood had become too wary and had fled into the country. That the efforts thus made to obtain recruits by force were not attended with much success is shown by a second letter from St. Vincent to the Admiral :—

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,—

I lament the ill success of the general Impress from Protections in the vicinity of Torbay. I hope however before this reaches you that Admiral Dawes has sent you some hundreds from Plymouth, the more so as you may expect to receive your orders early on Monday Morning, and I know you will carry them into execution with promptitude. The demands for Stores should have been sent to the Commissioners at Plymouth : and if you will direct them to be made out and sent, they will be forwarded by the first Ship that joins you from thence. How the Ships became deficient I am at a loss to guess.

Yours in haste,

ST. VINCENT.

Cornwallis anchored in Torbay on May 12th, and although war was not actually declared until the 18th of that month he received an immediate order to detain both French and Dutch vessels, it being considered that Napoleon would drag in the Dutch. The Spanish, although supposed to be neutral, were forced by Napoleon from the outbreak of war to assist in every possible way, with the result that Cadiz and Ferrol became to all intents French arsenals. Nelson was immediately sent out to the Mediterranean to blockade Toulon. He did not, however, go out in the *Victory*, and it was only due to the friendship which Cornwallis had for him that he was able to hoist his flag on board that ship. She was originally intended for service with the Channel Fleet. On May 18th the Secretary to the Admiralty wrote to the Admiral :—

“I am commanded by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that they have ordered the *Victory* to join you off Brest and follow your orders.”

The letter proceeds to say in so many words that if he did not require her she was to be handed over to Nelson, who would shift his flag to her. The *Victory* was not detained, for which Nelson was profoundly grateful. Writing to Cornwallis the following July, he said :—

The *Victory* joined me last night, having been, via Malta, seven weeks from Gibraltar. I can only say to you thanks for not taking the *Victory* from me ; It was like yourself and very unlike many others which you and I know. She has been tolerably successful, and indeed except the *Amphion* the only ship under my command who have taken any thing of any consideration.

The Admiralty not allowing me to come out in the *Victory* direct from Portsmouth has lost the capture of two 74's and probably two frigates, and perhaps by this time much more.

The fleet here upon paper are very formidable, but in fact the *Victory*, *Belleisle* and *Donegal* are the only ships fit to keep the sea ; the rest are unfit for service until docked, although amongst the finest and certainly best-manned ships in our service.

I have at this moment only four sail to watch the French fleet ; the rest are in port refitting. The squadron in Toulon is 7 of the line, 5 or 6 frigates, and 6 or 7 corvettes, perfectly ready

for sea, and whenever they come out, which they will do whenever they have an object worth fighting for. (I do not mean to say that they will merely think us an object worth coming out to fight; I never saw a Frenchman yet fight for fighting's sake, and I do not believe they will now begin). . . .

With, my dear friend, my most ardent wishes for your meeting the French fleet, and for your health, believe me ever, with the sincerest regard, your most obliged and faithful friend,

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

The Channel Fleet which sailed on May 16th from Torbay under Cornwallis consisted of five ships of the line, but was soon after reinforced by the *Ville de Paris* (to which ship he shifted his flag) and three other line of battleships. It was subsequently increased to twenty-five ships of this class; but, like Nelson, he bitterly complained of want of frigates. The plan of blockade he adopted was similar to that carried out in 1801. He maintained an inshore squadron off Brest at first under Rear-Admiral Campbell. Both L'Orient and Rochefort were closely watched by Sir Edward Pellew, an officer well experienced in blockade work. His own rendezvous was off Ushant. Almost his first endeavour on taking command was to get back his friend Whitby as his Flag-Captain. Early in this year, before any idea of fresh hostilities were dreamt of, this officer had been given command of the *Belleisle* and sent to the Mediterranean, leaving his young wife in the Admiral's care at Newlands. There were difficulties, however, for writing on May 10th, St. Vincent said:—

“I will do my utmost to bring Captain Whitby from the Mediterranean, but at this moment I do not see my way in it.”

At the end of the letter just mentioned, Nelson said:—

“I have with me an élève of yours who I esteem most highly, not only as an active officer, but as a gentleman; his ship is always perfectly ready for any service, and he executes in the best style, and I am sure that Capt. Whitby will give me support in the true Cornwallis style should the French come out.”

The first blood in the new war was shed on May 23rd, when the French lugger *P'Affronteur*, after a spirited resistance, was captured by the *Doris*. This act was considered by Napoleon to have been a breach of international law. His reason being that, although war was declared between the two countries on the

18th, sufficient time had not elapsed between the departure of the British Ambassador from Paris and the transmission of the necessary intelligence to the British Fleet at sea !

Towards the latter end of June Cornwallis received information from the Admiralty that Admiral Bedout had sailed from the West Indies. He was instructed to send Admiral Campbell in command of a detached squadron with the object of intercepting the French Admiral, Collingwood taking over the command of the inshore squadron from him.

It is of interest to note how the British Government got to know that Admiral Bedout intended to return to Europe. Many will remember how during the last war [1914-18] the strictest measures were taken to prevent officers and men writing home to their relations anything, however (apparently) trivial, which might be of use to the enemy. Most men in the fighting-line appreciated the importance of the order, but in England their relations often complained of the brevity of letters from the front, and the meagre news they contained.

The information received about Admiral Bedout's intentions is a case in point, even though it happened 120 years ago, as it was obtained by the intercepting of letters ; in both cases letters written by officers to their wives—in the first instance by a man in a highly responsible position who should have known better. Although war had not actually been declared, he should have appreciated that relations between his country and England were those of a semi-active volcano ; no one could tell when the eruption would come, but all expected it. These are extracts from the letters referred to :—

“ Extract of a Letter from De Raine, Chef d'Administration, and Sub Prefect of the Northern Department of Saint Domingo, to his wife in France, dated 21 Floreal An. 11 (11th May, 1803):—

‘ Admiral Bedout sails in a few days for Toulon with the *Argonaute*, *Redoutable*, *Heros* and *Fougueux*. I shall send you a Letter by him. He is a respectable Man, and I think he will return to relieve Admiral Latouche.’

“ Extract of a Letter from Lieut. Julien on board the *Redoutable* to his Wife in France, dated the 19th Floreal An. 11 (9th May, 1802):—

‘I avail myself of the opportunity of a vessel proceeding to Havre to inform you of my arrival in this Island, and of my approaching departure for Toulon. We are now taking in Provisions, and shall sail between the 23rd and 30th Instant with the *Argonaute*, *Fougueux* and *Heros*. There are some apprehensions of a War, on account of which we are to proceed together.’”

In addition to Bedout’s squadron in Ferrol certain Dutch sail of the line were known to be there ; it therefore became necessary to blockade this port, a task at first entrusted by Cornwallis to Sir Robert Calder.

The scare of invasion was ever uppermost in people’s minds : even as it had been in the last war, so it was in this. Every French or Dutch fishing vessel likely to be of the slightest service in conveying troops across the Channel was immediately seized when possible and brought into a British port. There was hardly a communication from a secret agent which did not confirm the fact that preparations to this end were being made in every French arsenal.

Every school-boy knows that this venture never materialized except so far as the collection of a large army at Boulogne, and the erection of a huge obelisk on the hill above the town to commemorate one of Napoleon’s failures, and to remind the French that although they invaded England successfully in 1066 they failed in 1803-5.

Another menace to the naval forces of the country arose which, had it become generally known, might have caused an even greater scare. One wonders how many persons there are, beyond students of naval history, who realize that the French not only constructed but operated a submarine to be used against their enemies. In June of this year Cornwallis received the following from the Secretary of the Admiralty :—

SIR,—

My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having been informed that a plan has been concerted by Mr Fulton, an American resident at Paris, under the influence of the First Consul of the French Republic, for destroying the Maritime Force of this Country ; I am commanded by their Lordships to send you

herewith the substance of the information they have received relative thereto, that you may be apprized thereof, in order to Your taking such measures as may appear to you necessary for frustrating any attempt on the part of the Enemy connected therewith.

The following is an actual description of the vessel sent by a secret service agent from Paris :—

“ Mr Fulton, an American resident at Paris, has constructed a Vessel in which he has gone down to the bottom of the Water, and has remained thereunder for the space of *seven* Hours, at one time—that he has navigated the said Vessel, under the Water, at the rate of two Miles and an half per Hour ; that the said submarine Vessel is uncommonly manageable ; and that the whole plan to be effected by means thereof, maybe easily executed, and without much risk ; That the Ships and Vessels in the port of London are liable to be destroyed with ease, and that the Channel of the River Thames may be ruined ; and that it has been proved that only twenty five pounds Weight of Gunpowder was sufficient to have dashed a Vessel to pieces off Brest, tho’ externally applied.”

Whether this submarine could actually have been employed successfully it is not possible to say, but it was never used. Neither Villaret-Joyeuse, the Admiral in command at Brest, nor Caffarelli, the Maritime Prefect, would employ it, on the grounds that it was inhuman and contrary to all ethics of civilized warfare. Caffarelli is supposed to have said : “ Certes ! Ca n’est pas là la mort des militaires.” Fulton, the American referred to as the inventor of the submarine, afterwards designed the first steamship. He also invented what was known as the Spar Torpedo. It was proposed to have used this in conjunction with the submarine.

CHAPTER II

1803

BEYOND constant engagements between British and French frigates and privateers, in which the former were usually victorious, nothing of great moment occurred until July of this year, when it became known that Bedout had escaped through the net spread by Campbell, and had got scathless into Corunna. The first news which Cornwallis received of this was from Captain Wallis, of the *Naiad*, who had obtained it from the master of a Spanish coasting vessel cruising off Ferrol. It was confirmed a few days later by Sir Edward Pellew, who reported that the French ships "were in a very sickly state." The Admiral immediately reinforced Calder and ordered a strict blockade of Ferrol, to which port the French ships had crossed over from Corunna. In none of Cornwallis's dispatches did he attribute any blame to Campbell for this misfortune. A misfortune it turned out to be, for it was from the mizzen-top of the *Redoubtable*, one of the ships in question, that Nelson was mortally wounded at Trafalgar some two years later. Campbell's task was difficult, and in the orders sent to Cornwallis the former was only to be allowed one frigate and a cutter to assist him for reconnoitring purposes. A totally insufficient number considering the area to be patrolled. Cornwallis's correspondence at this period is full of accounts of brave deeds. It seems almost invidious to attempt to pick out one from the others. But the account of the capture of two French "chasse-marées" by the boats of the cutter *Sheerness* off Brest stands out as an example of how the determined bravery of a few can overcome many times their own number. The *Sheerness* was commanded by a Lieutenant Rowed; she was attached to the inshore squadron still commanded by Collingwood. One morning her commander observed the two "chasse-marées" in Douarnenez Bay and immediately gave chase. One of these ran ashore but was taken off by the largest boat belonging to the *Sheerness* manned by the mate and seven hands. Her crew had deserted her when she went aground, but kept up a musketry fire at close quarters on the British sailors during the operation of getting her off. Directly

Lieutenant Rowed saw his first prize safely off the shore, he got under way and chased the second, now some four miles away. The wind dropped and the cutter became becalmed. Nothing daunted, Rowed proceeded to man the skiff, the only boat he had left, in order to continue the pursuit. The remainder of the narrative is in his own words :—

“I had no sooner declared that this was my intention than John Marks, the boatswain, with 3 of the crew volunteered their services to go with me—that being as many as the boat could contain. After a hard pull of nearly two hours, I saw the ‘*chasse-marée*’ run on shore, or rather along side of the rocks, under a battery, about 8 or 9 miles to the eastward of Pointe du Raz ; at the same time I saw a number of soldiers repairing to her with muskets. On our giving way along side the crew hurried on shore, though supported by a heavy fire of musketry from near 30 soldiers, which was kept up the whole time (within pistol shot) that we were employed in getting her off, fortunately without our sustaining the least hurt. In this we were successful, though all her halliards had been cut away previous to her crew deserting her. We had not towed her more than 2 cables’ lengths from the shore when we perceived a boat, with a French officer and nine men armed with muskets, which had pulled after us in the wake of the ‘*chasse-marée*,’ close alongside her. We immediately gave up towing, and got on board the ‘*chasse-marée*,’ at the very time the Frenchman was laying in his oars to lay her alongside. No sooner did he observe it was our determination to defend our prize than he retreated, though his number doubled ours and the *Sheerness* was then 3 miles away from us.”

After mentioning how they came under the fire of the coast battery without hurt to themselves, Lieutenant Rowed proceeds to describe the extraordinary bravery of the boatswain Marks. This man “absolutely exposed himself unarmed on the side the Frenchman was going to board the ‘*chasse-marée*’ for at least half a minute before the rest could get out of the boat with their muskets.” In this episode the only features bearing on the ultimate result, which are comparable in their importance, are the extreme bravery of the English and the bad shooting of the French !

In September of this year, Captain Sutton relieved Collingwood as commander of the inshore squadron off Brest. The

latter rejoined Cornwallis off Ushant. A further change was made at the beginning of October, when Pellew relieved Calder off Ferrol.

The previous August, Mrs. Whitby, who was still at Newlands, was confined of a child which died shortly after it was born. For a long time she was at death's door. As already stated, her husband was in the Mediterranean with Nelson, and weeks, if not months, must elapse before he could be got in touch with. Mrs. Man, the wife of Admiral Man and an old friend of Cornwallis, who lived nearby, and knew of the affection which he bore for Whitby and his wife, wrote at once to tell him of the latter's sad loss and grievous illness. The Admiral realized that the one thing which would comfort the poor lady would be the sight of her husband. Kind-hearted man that he was, he wrote off at once to St. Vincent, telling him what had happened and making an urgent request for Whitby to be sent home, and after a short spell of leave to be allowed to join him as his Flag-Captain. It was, however, impossible at the time to comply with the Admiral's wishes. St. Vincent wrote him privately :—

“I am very desirous to comply with your wishes respecting Captain Whitby, more especially since the afflicting loss Mrs. Whitby has sustained. Unfortunately the Squadron in the Mediterranean requires to be considerably reinforced and at this moment we have not the means, consequently cannot call anything from thence until it can be amply replaced.”

However, altered conditions made it possible, and the following November he wrote again :—

“No time shall be lost in sending out a Captain to relieve Capt. Whitby, who will at the same time be appointed Captain of the *Ville de Paris*.”

The Admiral had got his way, and wrote a charming letter to the wife of his old friend, telling her what he knew would do her more good than any doctors or medicines, for she was still in a precarious state of health. The letter, which begins “My dear Theresa,” says :—

Your Husband is returning to make you happy again, which I long so much to see. I am not indifferent about John's coming, I do assure you (if it was necessary) upon my own account : for of all people in the world he is the person I wish

to have with me. I hope all your troubles will be removed, and that you have only to look to the happy day when he arrives, and that it may be very soon is the most sincere wish of, my dear Theresa, your ever faithful and affectionate friend and servant,

W. CORNWALLIS.

When he heard in August how ill and depressed Mrs. Whitby was, the Admiral also wrote to another old friend of his, Countess de la Warr, who happened to be staying near Newlands at the time. He asked her to call and befriend Mrs. Whitby, an act of friendship which she gladly undertook. Mention is made of this as it is a curious coincidence that Cornwallis should have asked one lady, who was the author's great-great-grandmother on the one side, to be kind to another who was his great-grandmother on the other, both ladies at the time being entirely unacquainted. The two families indeed did not meet again until many years later. In her letter thanking the Admiral for his kindness, Mrs. Whitby said :—

“The kind concern and interest you express for me and my misfortune affect me beyond measure as they convince me of your affection, which, that I may continue to enjoy, and in some degree merit, is one of my first prayers and wishes. You know not the delight it gives me to find you think of me with regard, and how much better I always feel after I have heard from you—it is next to getting a letter from John.”

Before leaving the Mediterranean, Whitby wrote in ecstasy to the Admiral over his coming change :—

“Everything you mention in your letter makes me know how truly I am indebted to your kindness and affection. . . . In coming out here as a sense of duty I sacrificed every feeling in the world, and had I not had you to befriend my dear wife with your kind care perhaps I might not have summoned the strength of mind to have parted ; in short, I owe everything to you.”

The letter goes on to tell of naval matters in the Mediterranean, and says, amongst other things :—

“We have hardly a port to go to on this station. Naples is without the track. The Spaniards are uncivil and lay very hard restraint upon our communication. Malta is so far and, as well as Gibraltar, so out of the way that, except the barren shores of Sardinia, we have no where to thrust our noses. The conse-

quence is that the greatest inconvenience must and does ensue. We are without butter, wine, porter, nay almost cloathes. . . . Lord Nelson expects them [the Toulon Fleet] out constantly, but that is altogether doubtful. However, in this as in all other cases, if they do come, it will be when nobody expects them and the idea laid asleep. . . . The *Excellent* arrived, by way of being a fresh ship. Her main and mizzen rigging is already condemned by survey ! ”

Towards the end of 1803 all information from secret agents suggested that an attempt was to be made upon the coasts of Ireland. Owing to stubbornness of George III in refusing to give his consent to the Irish Catholic Emancipation Bill that country was again seething with discontent. Mrs. Man, in her letter to the Admiral, already referred to, concluded it by saying : “ Bad accounts from Ireland—two of the provinces declared to be out of the King’s peace.”

The French were not slow to take advantage of the situation, and probably encouraged the idea of invasion in order to cause a withdrawal of ships of war to defend the Irish coasts, and so weaken the blockade of their own ports. The British Government were convinced that the information was correct and that the attempt would be made. They had previous experience to go upon !

In September 1803 Cornwallis was sent a copy of a letter from a secret service agent addressed to the Admiralty :—

“ This day I received a Letter from Marseilles dated the 28th of last Month. It was brought by Mr. W—— to Basel, and forwarded from thence to his Correspondent in London. The following is part of it : ‘ That the Brest Fleet and probably the Spanish Fleet are to put to Sea at the same time the armament against London does ; that 50,000 Soldiers are to be put on board the Men of War and Frigates, with a few Transports, a great Quantity of Field Artillery and Horse Furniture are now on board ; that all the Irish who were waiting at Toulon and Lyons waiting for orders have gone to Brest. That on the Fleet’s making the Coast of Ireland it is to divide for two attacks ; the Placards are posted in all the Streets at Lyons and Marseilles for Sailors ; that it is the great hopes of Plunder that make the Soldiers easy.”

A month later the Admiral received a lengthy memorandum

on the subject from the Secretary to the Admiralty, from which the following are extracts. The memo was, of course, based on the assumption that the French Fleet, or part of it, had escaped from Brest :—

“In my letter of the 14th instant I transmitted to you by command of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty an Extract of Intelligence which had been received of the preparations of the Enemy in the ports of Brest and Lorient with a view to a descent on Ireland ; and I have now the honor of acquainting you that considering the source from which that Intelligence was obtained, no doubt ought to be entertained that the Expedition will be attempted whenever a favorable opportunity may present itself to the Enemy for so doing, either by the absence of the Squadron under your command from its Station, or of its being from any circumstance so reduced in point of numbers as to induce the enemy to think that an Attack upon it ought to be risked.”

The possibility that Napoleon might make a feint of a descent upon Ireland, his real intention being to obtain command of the Channel and cover the embarkation of his troops at Boulogne, had to be considered. The same order continues :—

“Having taken your station off the Lizard, you will not quit it in pursuit of the Enemy until you shall receive such Intelligence as may leave no doubt of his destination, and supposing it to be directed to the coast of Ireland, you will follow it to whatever point it may proceed, but as I have before observed, you will not quit your Station off the Lizard without the most authentic information of the Enemy’s movements, and this is the more necessary, as, in the event of any favorable opportunity presenting itself, it is not impossible that the Enemy may attempt to run up Channel either for the purpose of landing the Troops which may be embarked in the Squadron, or for covering any body of Troops destined to act against this Country which may be ready on the Enemy’s Coast to be thrown across the Channel under cover of this Squadron, which, during your absence, it might not be possible to prevent.”

The dispositions taken to meet these eventualities which threatened necessitated the immediate weakening of Cornwallis’s blockading squadron, and to an even greater extent the following November.

Gardner at Cork was reinforced, and Sir Robert Calder given command of an independent squadron to operate off the West Coast of Ireland. Part of Cornwallis's orders to the latter state :

“It is intended that the ships so stationed upon the coast of Ireland may, upon the appearance of an enemy's squadron, be able to keep them in check, if not actually attack them, before I can with the rest of the squadron at the time with me be able to get up with them, . . . you are therefore, as may appear to you most [word missing, advantageous?] for the King's service, from intelligence received at the time, having always in view the preventing a landing of the enemy in Ireland, to be very vigilant in the execution of the service. . . .”

In all Cornwallis's orders to Flag officers and Captains serving under him, he made it abundantly clear that the principal object of blockade was to protect the entrance to the English Channel.

CHAPTER III

1804

JUDGING by the number of reports of secret service agents sent to Cornwallis during the blockade, this organization was certainly active if not always accurate.

So far as the Navy was concerned much information was obtained by boarding neutral vessels at sea and questioning their officers. There are many reports of intelligence thus gained, and it seems to have been at all times imparted with the best of goodwill by men of many nationalities : a proof, if one was necessary, of how Napoleon was hated and feared in Europe. The following are chosen as being the most interesting. The originals are in French :—

PARIS, 27th Jan., 1804.

The orders given to Vice Admiral Latouche were so precise that the Government takes it for granted that he is now at sea. Out of 12 Line of Battle Ships 7 only were in the Port of Toulon, ready and fitted out. An order was given for these 7 to sail with 2 Frigates, which were also ready. The other five Battle Ships of the Line remain at Toulon under the command of Rear Admiral Lassigne, who will follow the Vice Admiral when they are ready to start. Vice Admiral Latouche is ordered to proceed to Spanish ports and join up with the five French vessels which are sheltering at Corunna, at Ferrol and at Cadiz, the whole to sail from there towards Brest when favourable moment arrives. Rear Admiral Lassigne, if he can be ready soon enough to join Admiral Latouche in Spain, is to proceed also with him towards Brest. The three ships at Rochefort will also depart and join up with the Vice Admiral, the whole to reunite under the protection of the Fleet at Brest. The press gang at all places has provided the necessary number of sailors, and the stores bought in the

North by Commissary Bergerin have for the most part been delivered in the various ports. It is hoped that they will suffice to provide for the needs of the rest of the Fleet, which it is believed will be ready to sail within 6 weeks or 2 months. The two frigates *Cibèle* and *Didon* have received orders to re-fit, one for Cayenne and the Windward Islands, and the other for the United States of America. The two Corsairs from St. Malo are on the eve of their departure. There are no further immediate movements from any ports. The frigate destined for Cayenne is ordered to embark some money, troops and certain stores. Admiral Bruix is much better but is not yet out of the wood, his condition is still very dangerous. Here is the exact number of Line of Battle Ships—21 at Brest, 3 at Rochefort, 5 in Spain, 13 at Toulon.

The following is another report from a secret agent at Brest, dated January 20th :—

“A Fleet is fitting out here and an Expeditionary Force is in the process of being organised and equipped. One sees many officials and general contractors who have a great reputation. They may be excellent political adherents but not at all fitted to carry out the office for which they are destined. Six months ago there were no ships, to-day there are 13 at anchor in the roadstead, and nearly as many armed in the port. This is due to the Maritime Prefect Caferelli. There was no hemp, but he found means of getting some from Quimper. There were no seamen, but a strong press gang has produced as many as were required for the completion of the ships' crews. They have been drilled and equipped. In spite of all these preparations it is considered here by the regular sailors that the expedition will not be able to put to sea before 6 weeks or 2 months, and on this point there is only one opinion in the port.”

A further report from the same agent is dated a week later :—

“It appears that all the efforts of Bonaparte are directed towards the coast at Boulogne, and it is from there that the great effort will be made. At a military dinner here, Augereau and his Officers have drunk success to the expedition [one is reminded of ‘der Tag’ more than a century later !], but everyone is of the opinion here that it cannot take place before 2 months. At Brest at any rate enormous preparations are being made which are not yet ready,

and until completed will not allow of any force being put to sea. There are certainly 13 vessels in the roads, but that is not enough. They will require 20 to 25. That fine ship the *Vengeur*, a three-decker, which will be the flag-ship of the Admiral, has been given the name of *Napoleon*. Truguet will command her. The *Ocean*, also a three-decker, is being re-fitted. It is thought here that the two ships which are at Lorient are joined up with the three at Rochefort, and that these five vessels will proceed and join those at Ferrol. This is quite probable, first because an Expeditionary Force is remaining on that coast, and again because it is believed that the plan of the Government is to attack the United Kingdom at all points. The storms of the last two days appear to have obliged Admiral Cornwallis to leave his station. It was feared at one moment that the ships in the roads had sustained much damage, but this has been reduced to slight injuries suffered by the *Watigny* and the *Invincible*.

“Rioux, one of the richest ship owners here, has put his flotilla of 10 small ships at the disposal of the Government. They are about to sail for Boulogne. This man Rioux has given fêtes here at a tremendous expense, but in spite of that he had well feathered his own nest out of the Naval service.”

Much of the information sent to Cornwallis emanated from Captain Philip D’Auvergne, known as the Duc de Bouillon. This man had an extraordinarily interesting and romantic career. Born in Jersey, he entered the British Navy and served under Howe in the American War of Independence. He was subsequently taken prisoner, and when interned in France came under the notice of the reigning Duc de Bouillon, whose family name was d’Auvergne. This nobleman, of the same race as the great Turenne, had lost one of his sons, and his second son was seriously ill. There were apparently no other heirs to the title. A search was made and it was found that the old Duke and the young naval officer had common ancestry. The latter was at once acknowledged as heir to the title and estates. The revolution, however, deprived him of any advantage that this extraordinary coincidence might have brought him.

Captain d’Auvergne, both in the previous and present war, had been of the utmost service to his country. His headquarters were in Jersey, where he installed a sort of clearing-house for secret information. His agents were everywhere. Not only did

he assist the English, but he planned and aided the escape of many unfortunate French "émigrés." It is possible to imagine that he and the "Scarlet Pimpernel," that romantic figure created by Baroness Orczy, are one and the same person.

It was d'Auvergne who in the last war had warned the Government that mutiny in the fleet was being fomented "among the Irish Seamen and Marines by secret agents actually embarked in the Fleet, to whom money is allowed for the prosecution of those treacherous intentions."

How like the present Communist propaganda! How often history repeats itself!

The information obtained from this source as to the movement of troops and ships was usually correct. Where all the secret agents were wrong, however, was in their insistence that a descent on Ireland was not only contemplated but in active preparation. It is on this account that one is led to believe that this rumour was spread purposely as a blind to cover the real intentions of the enemy, which was, as history has shown, a determination to invade England from Boulogne, after defeating her at sea, or at any rate obtaining a temporary command of the Channel.

Another remarkable man who was of great service to the Admiral was Jerome Hamon, pilot of the *Immortalité*. Being of French descent he spoke French extremely well, and volunteered to go ashore and see what he could find out about the fleet in Brest. Consent was given. It had been previously arranged that a boat from his ship should be at a certain place near the shore to bring him back. On five consecutive nights the boat was sent to meet him, but he failed to turn up, and it was concluded that he had been captured. Three days after he appeared alongside his ship in a boat rowed by two Frenchmen. The following is his own narrative:—

"As I was apprehensive that I should be taken and treated as a spy, I gave up all idea of attempting to get on board in the manner, and at the time agreed upon, and came to the resolution of hiring a boat to go into Camaret Bay. I accordingly hired a boat, but when we came near Camaret Bay, I told the men I did not mean that bay but Bertheaume Bay, which was much nearer the ship: the men rowed me towards this place, and when we came near it, I again told them I wished to go to point St.

Mathew's, only within two gun shots of the frigate ; upon hearing this the men flew into a violent passion, telling me they would take me back to Brest. I immediately took out a brace of pistols from my pocket and, pointing one at each of them, exclaimed : 'I am an Englishman ; if you do not put me on board of my ship without delay, I will blow your brains out.' The Frenchmen judged it best to comply with my request."

He had actually been on board several ships of war in the harbour (under what pretext is not related) and was able to give precise information as to their condition and the state of their crews. Hamon performed this remarkable feat a second time a year or two later ; and again he had to find his own way back to his ship, as, owing to a change in command during his absence, a mistake occurred and no boat was sent for him. His narrative on this occasion tells of his disappointment at not finding a boat as arranged, and proceeds to say :—

"After walking some time on the beach, and being fired at random in the dark—I suppose by the patrols—I was obliged again to return to the town of Brest, where I remained until about two o'clock on Sunday, the fifth day of my being on shore, when I hired a boat in the harbour, with two boys in it, to take me on board a certain vessel there which I pointed out. But it was blowing rather fresh after getting a little way, the boys found it too great an undertaking for them, and wished to return. I agreed, re-landed, and paid them each half a crown, and with their boat sculled out of the harbour towards the ships at anchorage off the Brest roads. About four o'clock the next morning, they saw me from the *Culloden*, and sent a cutter, which picked me up about two miles from the ship ; and I verily believe I should have died of thirst and fatigue, for the boat being leaky had occasionally to be baled with one of my boots, and what with that, my anxiety, and sculling upwards of 14 hours without so much as a drop of water to refresh me, I dare say my being nearly exhausted will not surprise you."

On the other side of this report, which was made to the officer who had allowed him to go, was a complete list of every man-of-war, large and small, which was in Brest, and with both varied and lucid information concerning their state ; also a list of ships building or about to be launched from the stocks.

For these daring exploits Hamon received an autograph letter

from Cornwallis, the draft of which is in his private letter-book, and £50 from a grateful Government. Not a very large remuneration even for those days.

Another curious document sent to Cornwallis emanated from the secret service organization; it is dated February two years later, and is an extract from a letter to Sir Charles Cotton :—

SIR,—

I have to acquaint you that the *Snapper* schooner, Lieutenant ——, arrived at this place last evening from Martinique, with dispatches from Rear Admiral Cockrane, and that the Officer immediately went off by express for London—Two bull dogs, nine whelps, 5000 barrels of flour from America, which the inclosed Letter will more particularly explain.

Cotton supplied the explanation of this letter the following day :—

SIR,—

The Officer commanding the *Snapper* Schooner informed me that the Meaning of the Two Bull Dogs, Nine Whelps, and 5000 Barrels of flour expected from America, which he had in a Memorandum from the Honble Rear Adl. Cochrane, was Two Sail of the Line, 9 Frigates with 5000 French Troops.

CHAPTER IV

1804

THE storms at the beginning of 1804 were terrific. There was hardly a Captain's report sent to Cornwallis that did not mention serious damage to the ships they commanded. Squadrons were driven off their stations and had to seek shelter in the nearest home port. The only redeeming feature was that the gales which made strict blockade impossible also prevented the French from coming out of their harbours. Cornwallis had been nearly nine months at sea without setting foot on land; greater glory may attach itself to an actual victory, but constant strain, constant watching for months on end calls for greater fortitude, greater strength of character. Considering he was a man of sixty he had up to now withstood the inevitable hardships fairly well. It may not be amiss to describe his personal appearance at this date. The following appeared in the January-June number of the *Naval Chronicle* for 1804.

“In respect to person, he is of the middle size, stout and portly, with a certain degree of prominence before, which may be supposed to add dignity to a Commander-in-Chief, and must be allowed not to be unbecoming in an Officer now in the sixtieth year of his age.

“As to talents, his skill and bravery are undoubted, his seamanship is in particular in high repute; and a long apprenticeship, of more than forty years, during which he has had fewer intervals of relaxation on shore than perhaps any other Officer of equal rank in the British navy, has enabled him to acquire a degree of professional capability, which renders no disaster unknown, and no situation unusual to him. In point of habits, he is a reserved man; and is so little desirous of bustle when on shore that on its being observed, during a temporary residence near Chichester, that ‘he must be very

lonely,' he replied 'that the cabbage-stocks in his garden were sufficient company for him.'

"At times he enjoys his glass freely; but is so abstemious while on duty that he has been known for six months together to drink no more than a couple of glasses of wine at dinner, after which he carefully abstained from any other refreshment during the succeeding part of the day."

It was not until February 9th that Cornwallis was able to leave Torbay and his ships return to their various stations.

Pelley's task of blockading Ferrol was also one of extraordinary difficulty. His nearest base was Plymouth, over five hundred miles distant, and his squadron was exposed to all the fury of the Atlantic. Early in 1804, recognizing the impossibility of maintaining a blockade under such conditions, he occupied the Bay of Betanzos, separated from the harbour of Ferrol by only a narrow strip of land. In doing so he was taking a grave risk, as the bay was reputed to be totally unsafe for the purposes of anchorage. The risk was justified. Writing to Cornwallis the same month—the Brest Fleet was driven into Torbay—Pelley said: "The bay equals our fullest expectations, having never started one anchor during the violent gales we have had, and from which, had we continued at sea, we should in all probability have been completely crippled." This action on the part of Pelley was at first considered by the French as a perfect godsend. The evil reputation of the bay was well known, and they only awaited a gale strong enough to cause the British Fleet to drag their anchors: but as time went on and they did not, Gourdon, the French Admiral in command at Ferrol, who had relieved Bedout in January, became more and more angry. He could not evade the blockade and get out so long as every movement he made was seen by the English. It was useless his complaining to the Spaniards, who were still supposed to be neutral, and were only permitting his enemy to do exactly the same as they were allowing him to. How angry he was Pelley mentions in a private letter to Cornwallis dated February 9th:—

"I have said so much on this fine anchorage that I need not repeat it to you, Sir. Had old Wallis not lost his nerves, we should have saved much mischief to the Ships long before. We are upon the most friendly terms with the Dons, who visit

me all day long from Ferrol. Monsieur Gourdon comes frequently to the Beach to see us (he says) driven on shore, and most excessively angry he is. We are not permitted to go so near their ships, but our look-out Lieuts. meet at a Wind-Mill on a hill between the two Ports—out of one Window my Lieut. spys them, and out of the opposite one looks their officer upon us. The Squadrons only three mile apart. Buller proposes a Pic-nic there with Mons. Gourdon, as we find they dine there frequently.”

The letter continuing gives an idea of the constant difficulties of wear and tear, which had to be contended with in those days, in ships engaged in blockade work at a distance from their base.

“As we were not caulked when commissioned, we have not a dry hammock in the Ship, and what is worse the Magazine becomes more damp every day, so that powder fill’d three days cannot be lifted by the cartridge, 1600 and odd have been condemned by survey—and the regular loss of above 100 Weekly. Every pound of Pitch in the Ships has been long since expended, so that our Caulkers are at stand: nor are they able to do any more than stop partial leaks. I shall hope therefore whenever relieved that we may go to a Port, when the defects can be made good, otherwise this fine ship will be ruin’d.”

Pellev was a diplomat as well as a sailor, and did his utmost to preserve peace between Spain and England. In the same letter he said:—

“You may rest assured, Sir, I will not offend the Spaniards without absolute necessity, for notwithstanding he takes on himself responsibility I should never forgive myself for being the instrument of making a war with Spain unavoidable. God knows we have enemies enough upon our hands.”

This letter was soon followed by a dispatch Pellev had received from Frere, who was British Minister at Madrid at the time. The dispatch in question deals with the activities of the Spanish Government, who were fitting out an expedition of considerable strength at Ferrol without any apparent object. After giving an account of this, Frere concludes by saying:

“In the present situation of the two Countries I should consider myself as wholly inexcusable if I were to connive at the execution of a measure of such an importance and, under all its circumstances, of so suspicious a nature. I must therefore recommend

it to you as an object (as it appears to me) of the utmost consequence to His Majesty's service that the sailing of the above mentioned armament, first by a declaration of your being authorised to oppose it by force, and finally by the exertion of force, if unhappily such an extremity should become necessary.

"The expedition cannot, I suppose, be in a state to put to sea for some weeks ; and it is possible that the protests, which I shall think it my duty to make, may so far delay it as to render it possible to receive instructions from England. In the meantime, however, and unless you should yourself receive instructions to the contrary, I beg to be considered as charging myself with any responsibility which may attach to the measure which I have recommended."

Mr. Frere sent a covering letter with this dispatch. In this it will be observed that he goes out of his way to repudiate any idea Pellew may have had that he had failed in his diplomacy with the Spaniards. The original letter found amongst the Admiral's papers is interesting, and it has the top corner torn out.

MADRID, *January 28, 1804.*

DEAR SIR,—

The corresponding piece of paper which is torn from the corner of this sheet will probably be delivered to you by a Royalist, who, under the pretence of fitting out a privateer, undertakes an expedition to supply his friends with powder.

If it were possible to send a frigate off St. Giles or elsewhere to the north of Sables, it might be of great service to their cause, and might enable them to keep up a communication, which is now cut off, between the Morbihan and the La Vendée. It might likewise afford a means of retreat to their chiefs in case they should continue to be pressed and pursued in the manner they have lately—they are I understand in great want of firearms. I do not suppose you can have any great number to spare, but they would be of great service. In case you should find it possible to detach a vessel thither, the signal which I have given them is that of firing one shot, then hoisting a white ensign, and firing a second shot immediately after ; the answer from the shore to be three musquet shot. I am so jealous of your good opinion that I must add a line (not much to the purpose) to disculpate myself from an idea which you might entertain of my having

in any way excited this unhappy and ill-timed movement. It has been wholly spontaneous, or, more properly speaking, a necessary effect of the various tyrannical measures of the Gov. and particularly of the conscription. The chiefs have been hurried away by the impetuous resentment of the people, and obliged to put themselves at their head. Many have been already the victims of their compliance, and of their wish to retain their influence by sharing their dangers. In this state of things every feeling of policy or of humanity seems to point them out as objects for protection.

As I may not have an opportunity of sending a messenger so often as I may wish to write, I would beg you to observe that every Letter which is sealed with the black wax will contain a postscript in Lemon juice. Whenever I do send a messenger, I should be glad to avail myself of the opportunity for the execution of any commission which you might honour me with. Madrid does not offer much, but as long as I remain here my best services will be always at your disposal, and I shall esteem myself happy in the occasion of testifying the sincere respect with which I remain,

Dear Sir, your most faithful, humble Servant,

J. H. FRERE.

Frere also gave a list of the Spanish and Dutch men-of-war in Ferrol and Corunna.

On February 8th Pellew receives another letter from Frere, enclosing a letter from Nelson. The latter only is given, as the former is of no interest, as it makes no comment on the news received :—

“VICTORY,” *January 23, 1804.*

SIR,—

I have just received information that leads me to believe that the French fleet is either put to sea or on the eve of it and bound to the eastward towards Naples and Sicily. I am this moment making sail in the direction I think most likely to intercept them. His Majesty's fleet is in high health, and the events of a meeting ought not to be doubted.

I am, etc., etc.

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

Pellew rightly considered this information to be of vital importance. He sent it immediately to Cornwallis, writing himself at the same time :—

“The enclosed Letters came to me last Night, and are of such importance that I send the *Sheerness* to you with them. As they have caused me to combine the possibility of the Enemy’s striking a blow at us here, with the report I have from Ferrol, where a Council of War was held two days since by the French Commodore on the Question of ordering the Ships at Corunna to sail the first opportunity, without waiting the Division at Ferrol, this Question was decided in the Negative on the Ground of expected relief from the Squadron at Toulon or Brest.

“I shall not altogether give up this Anchorage on this Information, as Lord Nelson speaks only of his belief of the Enemy having sailed, not positively as to its being a fact. We shall hold ourselves on Guard, and do our best without the *Spencer*, which Ship I fear has sustained some Damage and gone home.

“I shall hope soon to receive Directions from you, as the necessity of having a Frigate at Command to Communicate becomes more necessary than ever.

“It is to be hoped the *Sheerness* may reach your Flag before anything leaves you to come this way.”

In view of Nelson’s letter and Frere’s report it certainly looked as if some serious move were contemplated by the enemy. In a further letter to Cornwallis dated March 2nd, Pellew corroborated both. Of the expedition supposed to be preparing at Ferrol, he said: “The information was sent me by a Colonel in the Spanish service whose name it will not be proper to mention—and I have yesterday seen a confirmation of it, by the Militia having marched out of the Fort abreast of our anchorage.” And as regards the Toulon fleet coming out, he goes on to say: “The Consul at Ferrol informs me he has seen a letter from Toulon, now 17 days old to an officer here, stating the Toulon Squadron to be still there but expecting to sail hourly.”

This alarm proved to be unfounded. Napoleon was not yet ready.

It was not until February of this year that Nelson received

instructions from the Admiralty to allow Capt. Whitby to return home. Writing to Cornwallis the same month, he said :

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

Where your kind letter of September 27th has been travelling to I cannot guess ; it only reached me a few days ago, with the Admiralty order to allow Whitby to go to England, he being appointed to the *Ville de Paris*, and another Captain appointed to the *Belleisle*. However, as Captain Hargood is not arrived I have recommended Whitby to remain a short time longer in order to reap the harvest of all his toils in the *Belleisle* ; he has had an uphill work in her, and I should wish him to reap the fruit of his labours alongside a Frenchman. I expect them every hour to put to sea ; they have ten sail ready or nearly so. What a dreadful winter you have had, my dear friend ; we must not compare our Mediterranean weather with that of the Channel. That you may very soon see the French outside of Brest is the fervent wish of your most obliged and sincere friend.

Postscript.—I can assure you I am not singular in regretting the loss of Whitby from our little squadron ; it is universal.

The following March Whitby was relieved, but it was only through the kindness of Nelson that he was able to get to Gibraltar, and there transfer into a ship bound for England. Nelson wrote again to Cornwallis in March ; as was the case in most of his letters at this date, he bitterly complained of the want of Frigates.

Nothing but the desire to get Whitby to you could have induced me to send a ship to Gibraltar, for my distress for small ships is greater than can be conceived ; but I assure you there is nothing I would not readily do to meet your wishes. I sincerely hope that the French will soon give us both a meeting ; the result ought not to be doubted ; and then from my heart I hope that villain Buonaparte will be upset, and that we may have a permanent peace. It is really shocking that one animal should disturb the repose of Europe, who I believe wish for peace.

In parting with Captain Whitby I part with an indefatigable

officer who has had a hard task in the *Belleisle*, which he has left in good order.

With every sincere good wish for your health and complete success.

Believe me, my dear friend,

Your much obliged and affectionate

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

Early this year Cornwallis heard from his brother the Marquis, who was now living in retirement at Culford.

“I have felt much for you during the difficult and trying situations in which you have been lately placed.

“My first wish when you sailed from Torbay was that you would find the French fleet on the outside of the harbour, and have sufficient strength and opportunity to render, at least as far as those ships were concerned, all further blockading unnecessary. In failure of this, my next was gratified, by your having been able again to turn the key upon them.

“Ships, however, and men, too, must give way at last, and God only knows how all this business is to end.

“In the meantime you are the most popular man in England, and although some men may actually despise the voice of the public, or others may affect to do so, yet, after all, it is no very unpleasing sensation for a man to know that his conduct is universally approved and admired.”

In February Cornwallis was driven off the French coast by heavy weather and was forced to take refuge in Torbay. Such was his anxiety to get back to his station that it is said that, no sooner was he safe in harbour, than he caused the “Blue Peter” to be immediately hoisted. A hint to the ships’ companies that they were not to expect to remain there any length of time, but they would be expected to sail again so soon as the weather moderated. It was on this account that he was nicknamed “Billy Blue.” When he was in Torbay he received another letter from his brother complaining of his being unemployed: “I have just received your letter, and shall be glad that the wind may continue for some time longer in the South-West, that you may enjoy a little quiet, and refresh your seamen, who must have had a most fatiguing service. In addition to your other plagues, it is dreadful to be under the constant alarm of being

laid up. I hope however that the Enemy will at last afford you an opportunity of indemnifying yourself for all your sufferings. For unless their superiority was very great indeed, I should feel no doubt of the issue, if you could come fairly up with them. The newspapers are not always to be credited. I am still unemployed. I do not say this in the way of ill humour or discontent, but it is necessary for me as a Soldier, in times like the present, to show that it does not proceed from want of good will on my part."

How this brings to mind the exactly similar condition in the late war, when old gentlemen of sixty and over considered it a personal affront if they were not immediately employed in some capacity or other. Marquis Cornwallis was at this time sixty-six.

CHAPTER V

1804

IN March of this year Pellew was recalled temporarily to England. He was Member for Barnstaple, and it has always been suggested that the reason of his recall was in order that he might defend St. Vincent against the attacks that Pitt was making against him in the House of Commons. Before leaving Pellew wrote to Cornwallis: "I feel it very awkward to be removed at this moment, but I believe it is a pre-arrangement, and that it may assist from a conversation I had in town with the Secretary of State, [Pellew had been in England for a short time the previous December] and which I imparted to you, Sir, on my return. I don't know that it is so, but from conjecture, and like others I must fall in my ranks and obey." Speaking of George III, who was recovering from one of his periodical attacks of illness, he said: "I am overjoyed to hear our dear King is better, God keep him so, the embarrassment in his death would be terrible just now. Prayers are daily offered for him in all the Spanish Churches." Considering King George's known antipathy to the Roman Catholic religion the last piece of information strikes one as a generous act on the part of the Spaniards and their Church.

Pellew returned to his station on April 27th. His views then as to the possibility of the Toulon squadron evading Nelson and coming round to raise the blockade of Ferrol were somewhat modified, for he wrote privately to Cornwallis on May 9th:—

I cannot well see what can induce the French to move this way from Toulon unless the object is one grand rush for England by uniting their Naval Strength—it appears to me madness to leave the Mediterranean entirely exposed to our Fleet, and I

feel very little doubt should the releasing these Ships be their object on their way to Rochefort, that Lord Nelson will be so close after them that they will fear delay, as well as Combat.

The Council held by Mons. Gourdon, if my informant can be depended upon, certainly went to the point of expecting assistance from the Toulon Fleet at Brest, but as this assistance did not appear so absolutely necessary before I took this Anchorage, I don't think there could have been time to communicate my situation so far as Toulon. Nothing certainly can exceed the anxiety they betray to get out for some great blow, and yet I do not consider them fit for any Service, previous to their getting supplies of sails most particularly. I hope, Sir, to see something from you in a few days, and am, my dear Admiral, with great regard,

Your faithful servant,

ED. PELLOW.

In the same month Cornwallis received a copy of a resolution passed by the Corporation of London thanking him and the officers and men serving under him "for the very eminent services rendered their country, for their great zeal and uncommon exertions by which our enemies have been kept in a constant state of alarm, nor dared for a moment to show themselves upon that element which has so often been the scene of their defeat and their disgrace." Sir John Perring was Lord Mayor. In his covering letter, written in the somewhat flamboyant manner of the period, he told how the Corporation's resolution was "expressive of its high admiration of the distinguished conduct, and unparalleled exertions which add fresh lustre to character of the British Navy and prove that unwearied perseverance is equally its characteristic with the most undaunted heroism." Cornwallis was pleased at this mark of appreciation, and said so in a letter to Mrs. Whitby, telling her about it. He added, "I wonder if they [meaning the Corporation] truly appreciate the hardships all have suffered in the winter that is past. Collingwood preferred cold to wet; both are bad when you can retire from neither!" This last sentence referred to a private letter to him from Admiral Collingwood dated the previous February, which said: "This cold weather is a very

agreeable change to me, for the constant wet and scanty clothing of this ship's company was increasing our sick list." In a later letter to Mrs. Whitby, telling her that "John should be with you any week now," he hints for the first time at the possibility that Whitby might suffer in his profession if he came to him as his Flag-Captain on board the *Ville de Paris*. Whitby was a fairly senior Captain in the Navy at this date, and had commanded a Battleship for some years, including practically the whole of the Admiral's non-employed period from 1796-1801. Cornwallis realized that it was usual for a Flag-Captain to be a junior officer, who, from this very reason, would not object to playing second fiddle to the Admiral, a position that any Flag-Captain might find himself in with the Commander-in-Chief living on board his ship. Knowing the bond of affection that existed between the two men one can appreciate the desire that Cornwallis felt to have Whitby with him, at the same time the last thing he wished to do was to risk creating friction between them, or to hurt him in his profession. Mrs. Whitby, in her answer, said: "Put these thoughts away from you, my dear Admiral. I know John: his first and last considerations are how he can best serve you." The letter goes on to talk business, and reads more as if it had been written by a woman of forty-one instead of twenty-one. It describes building and farming operations, and everything to do with the running of an estate; the last sentence especially strikes one. "The girls in this part of the world generally run wild in the fields; I have now persuaded a number that industry is a better occupation, and these employ themselves in making straw bonnets, and to encourage them I have desired one to be made for myself."

Whitby, who had been given a passage home in the *Fisgard*, arrived in London on June 10th. It will be remembered how Mahan, in his *Life of Nelson* (vol. ii, p. 214-20), shows clearly that the latter longed for the French Fleet to come out of Toulon. He did everything he could to lure them out, so that he could pounce upon them. It was for this reason he purposely divided his fleet, and only kept a small squadron in the immediate vicinity of Toulon, which was inferior in strength to the fleet within that port. In view of this the following letter from Captain Whitby, written from London the moment he arrived to his old chief, is of interest:—

June 11th, 1804.

Many thanks, my dearest Admiral, for your two kind Letters, which on the happy moment of my Arrival last Night I had the great pleasure to receive. I cannot say how much I feel obliged by your Application for me; upon the subject however, I can say, if it does not succeed, that I shall still have the satisfaction of serving with you, and must repeat that you may fully rely upon every endeavour on my Part to preserve Harmony and Cordiality with those whom I can have any relation: when my good Luck comes however, I shall not say with the Prelates, "I am unwilling to be a Bishop."

I came thro' Town, having landed at Dover. As I got in at night I went down to White's, among the Politicians: Mr. Bankes, *Ld. Sidney*, Duke of Montrose, &c., talking of parties, which seemed very extraordinary in that place to me, who recollect it an union of all the Pitt People; the Doctors shook their heads. People did not seem upon the whole to augur well of Mr. Pitt's Majority of 40. Different turns and Complexions were given to it. His People said that this did not affect other Questions, but that Persons who had voted for other Measures of Defence for the sake of System were obliged to oppose this: so said Bankes. Lord Sydney, on the other Hand, said that it proved that Mr. Pitt's Influence single and sole was nothing, and in short that they thought he could not hold on. The Dinners at Carlton House cause much Speculation, and in short nobody seems to know what to do, or what side to take. The Steeles have not attended, and many I understand keep aloof and do not mean to. I should like to see Mr. Pitt's old friends generally united—Addingtons, &c.—and so exclude the Grenvilles, Spencers, &c., &c. God keep out the two last. Mr. Pitt's tone in the House of Commons is not so high I think as it was with his triumphant Majority, which will teach him better manners, and perhaps he may succeed better and more moderately than before. I like the Board of Admiralty upon the whole. By the By I want to communicate one thing to you which appears to me of great Consequence, and but that our Seas are so clear and our Posts go so safe, I should have first sent you a Cypher by which it could have come to no one's Knowledge but yourself—it however may be told in very few words, and I shall do it. Tho' *Ld. Nelson* is indefatigable in

keeping the Sea, there are so many Reasons that make it possible for the French to escape thro' the Mediterranean, which of Course the Government are not told by him, and which perhaps he does not consider, (at least I think so) that I have been long determined to warn you of the Circumstance upon my Arrival, not choosing to trust it from the Mediterranean. First, then, he does not cruize upon his Rendezvous; second, I have consequently repeatedly known him from a Week to three Weeks and even a Month unfound by Ships sent to reconnoitre: the *Belleisle* herself was a week; thirdly, he is occasionally obliged to take the whole squadron in to water, a great distance from Toulon; fourthly, since I came away the French Squadron got out in his Absence, and cruized off Toulon several Days, and at last when he came out, he only got sight of them at a great Distance to see them cruise at their own Harbour. From all this I draw one general Conclusion, that it is very possible for them to escape him: upon the last occasion they might have got to the West Indies or elsewhere without the possibility of Discovery had they so chosen, and from all this I draw these particular ones likewise, concurring with the Circumstances. They have ten Sail of the Line at Toulon, one at Cadiz, four I think at Ferrol, six at Rochefort, and twenty you say at Brest—making in all one and forty Sail of the Line. If they pass Ld. Nelson, they can relieve Cadiz (which is only blockaded by two Frigates), Ferrol and Rochefort, and if on their way to Brest you meet them some Morning, when they are attempting a great junction, I shall not be surprised. I mention this to you that you may pay what attention you choose to this Scheme of Probabilities, and have your Ships so much in your Eye at Daylight that you may be prepared for their Reception. I write this in Confidence to you, for I would not absolutely dare to give my opinion of the Mediterranean Blockade to any other Person—for doubtless my Ld. Nelson is actuated by a thorough zeal to do right, for he is indeed a great and glorious Officer. I must add one other thing, however, which is that in gales of Wind he drives so far away that the finding him is very difficult and the Enemy have the greatest Chance. I have no doubt therefore that they *can* come out—the rest, the object remaining to be proved. I must tell you another thing: Gore, in the *Medusa*, is so inattentive in my opinion to his Situation

at Gibraltar, which I consider the Piquet Guard of you and my Ld. Nelson, and from which, and which only, you could reasonably hope for Intelligence, that I would not advise you to trust it. When I was there three Ships out of four were stripped for several days—this I think of the very last Importance. I may have judged erroneous throughout, but there will be no harm in the Hint which I am convinced you can receive from no other Quarter. God bless you, my dear Admiral. I shall say no more than that I am your most sincere and affectionate friend,

J. WHITBY.

As has already been said, Nelson liked Whitby and appreciated his services. Indeed, in the previous July he had written to him personally, saying: "I feel very sensibly all your attentions, not only as an Officer, which cannot be exceeded, but also as a private gentleman."

But, apart from this letter, one cannot for a moment believe that Whitby's criticism of Nelson was in any way malicious. Nelson's one idea was to endeavour to entice the French Fleet in Toulon to sea. Cornwallis, on the other hand, was doing his utmost to keep the French Fleet bottled up in Brest, and was responsible for the strict blockade of both Rochefort and Ferrol. Whitby was not only a great admirer of the latter professionally, but he was his greatest friend; that excuses the letter, if, indeed, excuse is necessary.

Whitby went to Newlands the day after his arrival in London. Both he and his wife wrote most grateful letters to the Admiral for having made it possible for them to be together again. She said: "John is writing to you, my dear Admiral, but I cannot suffer his letter to go without a few lines to express, if it is possible to do so, how very happy I am; were you here also I should not have another wish upon earth." Whitby wrote: "It gives me the most sincere satisfaction to find that Theresa has been enabled to render you any sort of service, but the happiness I feel at your esteem and regard for her is more than I can possibly express. That we may both be grateful friends and useful and acceptable ones to you thro' life God Almighty grant." A letter he wrote a few days later throws an interesting sidelight on the political rancour of the day. It says: "The night I was in town, I happened to express some curiosity

respecting the state of the Enemy, Fleet and army. The great men seemed to be quite astonished, and said that the Invasion was now no more heard of than if it had been never intended; for everything was now absorbed in domestic politics. I said I was sorry for it, as I expected to find sailors in great vogue. The reflection that came upon me was that, if that was the case, the Country was never in so much danger; for while we are firm, true and united among ourselves nothing dare assail us—but the instant the cause of quarrel is changed, and instead of the great Enemy of our Country we combat for Office, Places, and Pensions, our case becomes hopeless.”

Mrs. Whitby had evidently told her husband of the Admiral's misgivings about his being appointed Flag-Captain, for he wrote on June 16th: “I am not blind, believe me, to the sentiment you held with respect to sending for me to the *Ville de Paris*; and be assured that they bind me more effectually to you in affection and esteem. For myself I must tell you I will not listen to your hesitating to send for me from any notions of personal delicacy, or the using all the good that can be got out of me. I insist upon it that my interest, in whatever light your friendship may cause you to view it, may never stand in competition with your comfort or advantage.”

Unfortunately, the Admiral's forebodings were correct. Whitby found his position as Flag-Captain difficult, and very different from what he had been accustomed. It was the cause of the only misunderstanding the two men ever had, and a source of grief to both; but this will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter. Before joining the Admiral, Whitby wrote once more from London. Referring to the activities of the Prince of Wales, ever at loggerheads with his father, he said: “The Prince gives what the Papers call state dinners, and after the ‘King’ is drunk he makes a speech to the ‘Lords & Gentlemen’ (then and there assembled to get drunk) upon the state of affairs, which he seems to have some design to improve. I hope not at the expense of poor old Georgy, whom God protect. Except for the honour and glory of our Country I don't care much who is in, as long as there is an Admiralty that treat you well.”

Whitby joined the Admiral off Ushant on June 27th.

CHAPTER VI

1804

UPON Pitt resuming office in May of this year Lord Melville had become First Lord of the Admiralty.

After the way the former had attacked St. Vincent in Parliament, that officer declined to serve under his administration in any capacity. As Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet Cornwallis realized how necessary it was that he and the First Lord should pull together. He had already had some correspondence with him both as a private member and when, as Henry Dundas, he was Treasurer to the Navy in Rockingham's Administration; consequently they knew each other fairly intimately. This fact may account for the many private letters on important subjects which Cornwallis received from Melville, and which might otherwise have been sent officially. The Admiral's first letter was one congratulating Melville on his appointment. Melville, in his answer, realized the enormous responsibilities of his new position undertaken at a time when England was fighting for her very existence. His letter dated June 4th shows it :—

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,—

I have last night the honour of your obliging letter. I shall probably soon have occasion to write to you on an important subject connected with the service in which you are now engaged; but I would not delay a moment in answer to yours to assure you that, on every ground, public and private, it will give me much satisfaction to render the arduous service on which you are placed as agreeable and comfortable to you as circumstances admit of; and, besides your official letters, I will be happy to receive from you such private communications as you may be disposed to lay before me.

I thank you for your congratulations on my appointment to my present situation. Having obeyed the King's commands in accepting it, I will not allow myself to look back ; but when I contemplate all the difficulties which surround the extensive and complicated task I have undertaken, you will not suppose me insensible to the obstacles I have to surmount, and the exertions which the country has a right to expect from me. Under those circumstances I cannot pretend to be perfectly at ease.

Up to now there had been no attempt made to invade Ireland. Melville himself seems to have been somewhat sceptical as to this project. On July 14th he wrote to Cornwallis, giving his views as to what might be the alternative plans of the enemy, supposing any part of the French Fleet in Brest got through the blockade. The letter is of interest as showing the advantage of a fresh mind on an old problem. It reads :

“In some of the recent intelligence contained in your Correspondence, I observed that there was an Appearance of an intention at Brest to send out from thence a part of the Enemy's Fleet to the Amount of Nine or Ten Sail. If there was anything serious in that intention it is impossible to believe that with such a Force they could mean to come out with the view of meeting the Fleet under your Command ; and it seems equally clear, that if the Intention is to come on the Coasts of either England or Ireland, they would never think of sailing with any Force inferior to the whole of their Fleet.

“These Considerations have led me to revolve in my own mind whether it was probable the Enemy could have any other Objects which should induce them to detach a part of their Fleet from Brest for purposes different from the Attack of England or Ireland. Our whole Intelligence certainly tends to the Idea of their Brest Force being intended for some part of the United Kingdom, and I am disposed to believe that to be the Object most at Heart. If however from any Cause they should doubt their success so much as to look for other objects, I have been considering what would be the most likely to be pursued by them, if they could succeed in escaping from Brest with a considerable detachment of their Fleet.

“In the *first* place, is it altogether out of Contemplation

that they might think of embarking a considerable body of Troops on board their Fleet with the view of seizing the Cape of Good Hope or of making a Serious Attack on our Colonies in the Leeward Islands? *Secondly*, would it not be a very material point for them if they could come unexpectedly on our Squadrons blockading Rochefort and Ferrol? By such an operation they would not only hope to destroy these separate Squadrons of ours, but relieve their own blockaded Fleets, and enable them to reinforce their Fleet at Toulon so as to be superior to Lord Nelson in the Mediterranean. *Lastly*, is it quite out of the Question that without this intermediate Operation they might wish to render themselves superior at Sea in some important Quarter, and with that view send the Detachment from Brest *directly* to the Mediterranean to join the Fleet at Toulon?

“I am aware that all these Speculations proceed on the supposition of their escaping your Blockade, which I believe to be very difficult; but there are so many Examples of their having on former occasions succeeded in so doing, that it would be indulging an over Confidence to calculate upon this chance as altogether impossible under various Contingencies.

“If there is any solidity in any of these Conjectures, I daresay they must have occurred to yourself, and that you have taken your precautions for ascertaining with as much precision as possible the real destination, if any such circumstance should occur as the Escape of any material part of the French Force from the Port of Brest, but I thought it my duty in this Private, unofficial form to suggest to you what has occurred to me, and I should be glad to hear from you in what light the suggestions I have thrown out appear to you. I am free to confess that I conceive any of the Objects I have mentioned would be more likely to annoy this Country in some of its most essential Interests than any desperate attempt they may meditate of an Attack on any part of the United Kingdom, against such a superiority at Sea as we possess.”

Cornwallis went on leave about the date this letter must have reached him. When in England he naturally took the opportunity of having several discussions with the First Lord, who, as shown in a subsequent letter, came down to visit him at Newlands.

Sir Charles Cotton was to be temporarily in command of the fleet during the Commander-in-Chief's absence. Cornwallis's instructions to him before leaving were concise but specific. The whole idea of his strategy is summed up in the last paragraph, which reads: "Should any circumstance or accident occasion the French squadron to escape without being observed by the squadron with you, or the ships cruising closer to the mouth of the harbour, you are not to follow them (unless you can be very sure of the route they have taken) or leave the mouth of the Channel unguarded, as the enemy might in that case take the opportunity to push up the Channel for the purpose of aiding the threatened invasion of His Majesty's dominions, the protecting of which at this particular time being the principal object of the force placed under my command."

As the *Ville de Paris* required a refit at Portsmouth, the Admiral sailed in her and arrived off Spithead on July 22nd. One of the first to greet him was Mrs. Cary, a celebrated "Bum-boat" woman; her letter to him is amusing. "Mrs. Cary presents her respects to Admiral Cornwallis. She is alongside the *Ville de Paris* with a bottle of *Gin*, a Brown loaf, a pot of Fresh Butter, a Basket of garden stuff and a pint of rich Cream. If the Commander-in-Chief will not receive her and Party, she will immediately dash off to some of the young Captains."

After six months of indifferent fare her wares no doubt were most acceptable. One is inclined to ask whether certain graceful sea-birds known as "Mother Cary's chickens" are named after this arbitrary lady?

The Admiral was not allowed much respite. He had hardly had time to look at the additions and improvements at Newlands, which Mrs. Whitby had supervised, before he received the following from Lord Melville, who was apparently nervous at the idea of his being away from the fleet in such anxious times.

"You will of course feel that, in common with the other members of the Board of Admiralty, I participated in the satisfaction of receiving your letter of the 26th expressive of your readiness to return (at any moment, and on board any ship they might direct) to your command. I cannot help troubling you with a few private words on the subject. I should be indeed

of all men the most unreasonable if I was even to entertain, far less express, a wish for your return one moment sooner than suits your own convenience. All therefore I can permit myself to say upon the subject is, that as you must have a daily correspondence with your fleet, and are best acquainted with the character and efficiency of those you have left behind you, so, by these considerations, I am certain your conduct will be regulated. As I have the highest respect for the professional talents of those on whom the command has devolved, I must be at ease on that score ; but, on the other hand, you must be aware that, without depreciating the merits of any other officer, you possess the confidence of the country in the important trust which is now placed in your hands, and I am perfectly certain you will not be absent from the discharge of that trust at any moment you think it essential to the public service that you should be there. You have given too many eminent proofs of that feeling to leave a doubt of it in the mind of any person. I have a great desire to hold a conversation with you before you return to your command, and it will be no inconvenience to me to run down to you at any time you let me know it would most suit your convenience."

Running down to Newlands in those days meant 93 miles from London and back in a post-chaise, and Melville was a man of 62 !

After barely three weeks' leave, scarcely time to allow of a refit to the *Ville de Paris*, Cornwallis sailed to resume his duties. Writing to him on August 12th, Marquis Cornwallis said :

"It afforded me great satisfaction to learn that you had so pleasant an interview with Lord Melville. I acted several years under the direction of the Board at which he presided, and I can truly say that I never met with a more fair and honourable man.

"It was very handsome on your part to offer to go out in the manner you did, notwithstanding you had so extraordinary a claim to a little respite ; but if your health is equal to it, I think you judged very wisely, and I am very glad that you have now got Whitby for your Captain. . . .

"Nothing could be more unpopular with the generality of your brethren in the service than the example you set by staying out so long, and I truly believe it will not be much followed."

It is evident from this letter that the Admiral had set at rest any fears Melville may have had that his absence from his command was likely to be a long one. The last paragraph of the Marquis's letter seems unfair. Nelson, Collingwood, Calder, and other Flag officers had all had lengthy periods at sea. The majority seem only to have returned home when sent for, or when completely broken down in health.

CHAPTER VII

1804

BEFORE going on leave Cornwallis received a communication from Captain Puget enclosing a carefully thought-out scheme for destroying the enemy's fleet in Brest by means of fire-ships. As an explorer this officer had already made a name for himself; he was a friend of Vancouver, and it is after him that Puget Sound is named. At this date he was Captain of the *Fondroyant*.

In its conception Captain Puget's scheme for attacking the French Fleet in Brest with fire-ships is on a par with the Zeebrugge expedition in the late war. The latter, however, was successfully carried out, but the former was eventually abandoned, though not on account of any want of bravery or enterprise on the part of those who were to have taken part in it, as the following story will show. The letter referred to reads:—

Sir,—

Having turned my thoughts to the possibility of annoying the French Fleet at their present Anchorage in Brest, and conceiving their Position to be favourable for that purpose, I have under that Impression ventured to submit to your Consideration the enclosed Papers containing a Plan for an Attempt to destroy them by Fire Vessels, and at the same time offering my Services to conduct such an undertaking and to lead the Vessels into Brest.

Permit me to hope that in the Event of this Plan being honored with your Approbation, you will have the Goodness to mention my Name as well as those of the Officers who have volunteered for this Enterprise as Persons ready to execute it—and I trust, if we are permitted to undertake it, we Shall by our Exertions entitle ourselves to your Notice and Protection—to those Officers I have confided my Scheme, and when I mention Captain Patrick Campbell of the *Doris*, Lieutenant Thomas

Graves, 1st of this Ship, Lieutenant Milne of the *Mary* Cutter, and Lieutenant Ussher of the *Sir John Colpoys* Schooner, you will think with me that there is every Reliance to be placed on their Secrecy. [Both Campbell and Ussher became distinguished Admirals.]

I have selected Lieutenant Graves to accompany me in the Vessel that leads in, from the knowledge I have of his Abilities and Judgement, that should any Accident happen to me going in, I feel confident he would conduct the Enterprize to their appointed Stations.

I beg leave to remark to you that it frequently occurs that Convoys pass from the Eastward round St. Matthieus into Brest, probably the Enemy might be deceived in a Belief that our Vessels were of that description, and therefore let them pass unmolested.

As the success of the Enterprize must principally depend on the Equipment and fitting these Vessels ; and if the Charge is entrusted to my Care, I should hope to be allowed to attend that Service for a Short time, and to enable me to do so that an acting Captain might be put into the *Foudroyant*.

Your, etc., etc.,

PETER PUGET.

The scheme was drawn up with the greatest care, and every possibility dealt with. Tides, winds, currents, state of moon, dispositions of enemy, actual and probable, are taken into consideration ; a map, too, is provided.

It is unnecessary to publish the whole document, which is very long, but the following extract is of interest :—

“I certainly believe such a plan may, and will, be successfull from the Operation of fear on the human mind ; it is well known the consternation which even a common Fire produces on shore when assistance is near to get the flames under—in a Ship Fire is considered the greatest calamity that can happen, and such effect has it on the mind, that I have known, in three cases, Men jump overboard on the first alarm, thus rushing from an uncertain to a certain Death to avoid even the probability of being burned ; How much more would that fear be increased when a Ship is grappled by an Enemy for the avowed purpose of destruction, and whose plans are all arranged, if One Man in such a situation

jumped overboard, the rest would instantly follow, and this would certainly happen not only from the fear of Fire, but from the apprehension of an immediate explosion.

“There certainly appears, at the first glance, something like desperation in the attempt, but when it is considered that our plans have all the advantage of arrangement, and the Enemy off his Guard, we may presume that the boldness of the measure I propose, its sudden Operation, and the certain confusion and consternation it would produce will endure success to this Enterprize.”

Cornwallis, when on leave, took the opportunity of bringing the matter before Lord Melville, who wrote to him on July 10th :

DEAR ADMIRAL,

I have received your letter with its enclosures, which I return, as I don't know if you have copies of them. If the Enterprize proposed could be successfully executed, it would certainly redound much to the splendour of the British Navy and its enterprizing officers, and the means pointed out for the attempt are certainly on a moderate scale. You must feel how incompetent I am to form an accurate Judgment on the Subject, and must therefore refer myself to you. It is certainly a general impression I entertain on such occasions that very bold and daring enterprises generally succeed, and Captain Puget seems to detail his project very distinctly, together with the grounds on which he founds his hopes of success. The National advantages attending its success are too obvious to require illustration. I must therefore repeat again that I put myself, and my decision upon it, totally into your hands. It is not from a desire to avoid Responsibility that I state my sentiments in this way. I have no such feeling, for, if it fails, I should think it my duty to take the Responsibility on myself, but, if it succeeds, the whole merit should belong to those to whom it is justly due. If you resolve on the attempt, I suppose I shall hear from you more in detail, and it is probable you will think it right to appoint an acting Captain to the *Foudroyant*, and send Captain Puget home to make the Preparations you may think necessary.

I have the honour to remain, dear Admiral,

Yours very truly,

MELVILLE.

It will be remembered that in the previous war Captain Brisbane had proposed a similar scheme, but whether for this reason, or because he was considered a more experienced officer, it was decided to put him and not Captain Puget in charge of the venture it is not possible to say. The next letter from Melville, however, suggests that he and Cornwallis had had a further discussion on the matter, and had come to this decision.

Writing from Wimbledon, on August 9th, 1804, he said :—

“In your absence Captain Brisbane has just called on me, and I have conversed with him on the subject we discussed at our last meeting. I have *confidentially* communicated to him Captain Puget’s plan, with which he is much pleased, and I think there is room for availing ourselves of the service of both those enterprising officers in the execution of this attack, if, upon mature consideration, you shall determine upon making it. My own Mind certainly inclines to it, for the advantage to be gained by the success so far exceeds the risk to be run ; it is exactly one of those cases which call for a discreet exertion of the British valour and enterprise. Of course, you will have a complete explanation with Captains Brisbane and Puget. It occurs to me, and Captain Brisbane confirms me in the idea, that it might excite suspicion if Fire Vessels were sent to your Fleet before you were ready for the immediate use of them ; but I shall take care that Admiral Young is instructed to have every thing ready for you the moment you call for them, and I have desired Captain Brisbane to see Admiral Young and to prepare him for the calls that may be made upon him. It does not occur to me that there is anything more necessary to be added by me at present.”

Cornwallis, who was on his way to rejoin the fleet, writes in answer to this :—

“Captain Brisbane join’d me on board yesterday afternoon. He is very much flattered and sensible of your Lordship’s condescending manner of talking upon the particular subject with Him.

“It is proposed that eight Fire Vessels should be employed upon this service. Two of them should be of the size of the *Megæra*, and it would be desirable that ship should be one of them. I had the Honor of mentioning to your Lordship how

necessary it is that the Officers to command the Vessels should be chosen men, such as have offered themselves for such service or of known zeal for such enterprise. The Captains, of course, to command the divisions will be Brisbane, Puget and Campbell ; the Lieutenants Ussher, Milne and two or three others who I know to be men anxious for the most daring service. Your Lordship may depend upon it, no motive whatever shall induce me to employ any other. Perhaps if it is necessary to send Lieutenants out in the Vessels, they may be such as are appointed to Ships of the Squadron, which they will, of course, join, and leave room for the appointment of those intended for the particular service. Your Lordship is aware of the [unpopularity?—word missing from draft letter] of removing an officer regularly appointed when a Ship is going upon service ; in which case he will, of course, complain, whether he had really an inclination for it or not.

“The Ships and Vessels might be ordered to leave port to go Eastward for Boulogne, and then have seal’d orders to be open’d off the Lizard. They should join the squadron by the 29th. I intend the sooner it can be attempted the better. I have been detained by strong Westerly winds, rather unusual at this season, and I have been apprehensive, if I had attempted to beat out of the Channel, we might have found ourselves in the Downs.

“I am certain that your Lordship’s own zeal upon this occasion will have the desired effect. There are so many events occur in such enterprises that there is no answering for success. At all events it will redound to the Honour of our Country, which is the first consideration.”

Orders, in the meanwhile, had been given to the necessary departments to fit out vessels to act as fire-ships with all possible expedition, but delays occurred, and on August 26th Melville again wrote to Cornwallis : “Altho’ I cannot lay any blame of Remissness at the Door of any Person employed, it is clear that our Preparations cannot be advanced so much as to admit of the Vessels, &c., being off the Lizard Point as early as the 29th of this month.”

It was not until September 7th that the fire-ships sailed. Cornwallis was advised of this by Admiral Young, the Port Admiral at Plymouth, who wrote :—

“I send you two letters received this morning. They will probably inform you that the Vessels have gone down the River. If the Easterly wind we had yesterday had lasted, they would have been here in good time ; but the wind having this morning changed to the Westward the time of their arriving must be uncertain. However, as they have moved, I send you everything I have to send, which to prevent suspicion, or at least surprise, I have wished to keep to the last moment. What I have will be carried by the *Happy Return*, who has orders to convey them to the *Tromp* at Falmouth, for the storekeeper at Gibraltar ; but, by orders which I write myself, and which he will not open till he is at sea, he will be directed to go immediately to you. What he carries are two boxes, three packages sewed up in Hammocks, and six Sloop’s top chains—all of which Brisbane will, of course, have mentioned to you. The Boxes contain Dark Lanterns, the packages the parts of Grapnels which Brisbane should have in time to put them together. I have kept them separate that the men who made the different parts should not guess for what purposes they might be intended. You had better keep the cutter with you till the business is in some way determined, that her returning here may not discover what she has been doing.”

Minute instructions were also sent by General Congreve, who was Comptroller of the Royal Laboratory, as to the best means of using the various combustibles. Amongst these were a quantity of what were called “fire-barrels,” which looked like inverted beehives of the old-fashioned straw type. These were to be lit with what were known as “port-fires” ; these were really a sort of fuse which burnt fairly quickly.

On September 5th Melville had already sent Cornwallis a letter which one cannot but think should never have been written. He was First Lord, and had encouraged the idea from the first. He had interviewed Captain Brisbane, who was to lead the expedition, and had made all necessary preparations to fit it out without one word to his colleagues on the Board. At the last minute he tells them, and they disapprove of the scheme in its entirety. There were two courses open to him—either to have at once countermanded the whole enterprise, or to have allowed it to proceed according to the preparations made and at that time completed. Instead of adopting either of those courses he left

it to Cornwallis, his attitude being "go ahead if you like, but although I am with you, the Board are not." He should have realized that in writing as he did, the Admiral was bound to show it to those brave men who were prepared to risk their lives in the undertaking, and that doubt would be bred in their minds as well as in their Commanding Officer's, who with them could not have had the slightest knowledge that Melville was not supported by his colleagues. It must therefore have come as a bombshell when Melville wrote :

"Sir Andrew Hamond [Cornwallis's fleet-mate in the American war, now Comptroller to the Navy] reports to me that every thing requisite for the Secret Service is now ready to be sent from the River, and I trust therefore that if Wind or Weather does not obstruct their progress, the Vessels will not be long of reaching you. The enclosed is the Memorandum I have this day given to Mr. Marsden, that every thing may be duly expedited. The latter part respecting the Private Letter to yourself was not in the Minute I gave to Mr. Marsden, meaning myself, to write to you. And I likewise propose to write a few lines to Admiral Young, that he may dispatch every thing without delay, when the Vessels reach Plymouth.

"Having now put the Means into your hands of making this enterprising Attempt, I should not act fairly or candidly with you, if I did not explain to you that I had recently communicated to my Naval Colleagues the Preparations I was secretly making, and the Objects of them ; and from them I certainly have received no Encouragement to persevere. They concur in thinking that the Enemy must be supine beyond example, and totally negligent of the common vigilance which every Commander of a Fleet in the circumstances of the Brest Fleet ought to use, to give the most remote chance of success in this Attempt. Without being skilled, as they are, in Naval Operations, every Man of common Understanding must be aware that the Attempt is not less dangerous than it is enterprising, and nothing would be more remote from my Mind than to give an Order, originating from my own knowledge or Speculation, for carrying such a Service into execution. But that is not the Shape in which the Question comes before me nor the view in which I am called upon to consider it. The Suggestion comes from able and meritorious Officers, who have examined the Subject on the spot, who being

capable to appreciate the Chances of Success and the consequences of Failure, have formed a confident hope of Success, and have urged their request to be permitted to volunteer the service. These Sentiments they have with earnestness laid before their Commander in Chief, and by Him the Project has not been discountenanced, but transmitted to me. Under these circumstances, and duly appreciating the importance of the Service, if the Result of the Enterprize is favorable, I do not feel disposed to put a Negative, if upon again resolving the whole in their Minds, the same meritorious able and enterprizing officers shall still entertain the same Opinion and Hopes which they have formerly conveyed to you.

“I shall be most anxious to hear from you again. Till then I shall flatter myself with every Hope, as I must entertain every Wish for your Success. But whatever your ultimate determination may be, and whatever the Result may be, I am confident the best will be done.

“I have received your Letter of the 27th. The Proposition which has been laid before you of acting on shore seems to be attended with many difficulties, and certainly does not accord with former Intelligence ; but, at any rate, it would be inexpedient to postpone any other Enterprize in Contemplation till another Operation could be combined with it.”

The scheme referred to in the last paragraph probably refers to one conceived by Sir Thomas Graves, who was in command of the inshore squadron. On August 23rd, this officer had written to Sir Charles Cotton :—

“I am so much convinced of the practicability of destroying the Arsenal at Brest ; and of either Capturing or destroying the whole of their Ships at that Port ; that I cannot resist offering you my Ideas on the subject of such great importance ; which are, to land Five or Six Thousand Men to the Northward, and Three or Four Thousand Men to the Southward of Brest, and at the same time, to permit with Eight or Ten Sail of the Line to Enter the Harbour—by which means I am persuaded we shall do the business effectually without much loss, as I do not think their Ships will be prepared for such an attack. And it is well known by the Deserters now with us, that there are not Five Thousand troops at Brest, and these disaffected to their present state of Government, as well as the Men embarked on their

Ships ; which must fall an easy prey, if this Plan can be carried into effect with Secrecy and Dispatch.

“I beg leave to add that I think the attempt cannot fail of being crowned with success ; and that I shall be extremely happy to lead the Attack in this Ship, if I should not be honor’d with the Command of the Detachment destined for this Service.”

A curious thing about this letter is that it is dated from the *Foudroyant*, Captain Puget’s ship and Graves’ flag-ship. It can be assumed, therefore, that although both were living on the same ship, neither had mentioned to the other his respective scheme for attacking the enemy, although in a subsequent letter to Melville, Cornwallis seems to think Graves knew or, at any rate, suspected.

Cornwallis returned to his command and wrote to Graves :—

“I am just come out and am glad to learn from Sir Charles Cotton that all is safe notwithstanding the repeated alarms. I have no doubt but the utmost exertion will be used by all with you.”

It was not until September 1st that Cornwallis acquainted Graves of the proposed attack by fire-ships. He wrote :

“There has been for some time an intention of attempting the enemy’s squadron in Brest by fire. Whether vessels will be sent out in time I do not know. It will probably take place very suddenly, and it will be necessary to have the barges in readiness. The officers, should the attempt be made, are fixed upon and therefore no other volunteers can now be admitted except men, who of course must all be of that description, and I thank God there’s no want of such among British seamen. I intend being inshore myself at the time, but I think it proper to give you this notice, and I need not say how very necessary it is to be secret. . . . I must desire of you that you will not upon any account mention it to any person.”

CHAPTER VIII

1804

ALTHOUGH Puget's scheme never materialized, Brisbane's orders for its execution are worth recording.

A Pinnace or Barge to attend each Fire Ship, Manned with Volunteers. The Fire Ships to be in Three Divisions, under Captain Brisbane, who will lead, Captain Puget the center, Captain Campbell the Rear. To close up on Discovering the French Fleet and sail down on them in a line abreast, every Man taking his Bird. [Nautical term. A battle order giving every ship in the attack her positive objective.]

It is Captain Brisbane's intention to board the *Vengeur* if Possible, now bearing the French Admiral's Flag. Whatever may be the effect of the Batterys opening on us in going in, which is likely to take place, and it may also happen to some of us to have our Masts Disabled, so as to prevent the possibility of closing with the Enemy's Fleet, It is my Positive order the Ship will not be set on Fire in that Situation as it will be the means of Sacrificing, those who may be nearly Grappled with the Enemy, and you must wait however dangerous your Situation untill you have Discovered some of the Enemy's Ships on Fire.

You have then my orders to Destroy the Brig you Command, to prevent her falling into the Hands of the Enemy. The Loss of Top Mast is not to prevent our Boarding; you must be Guarded in not suffering a Boat to lay you on board; be prepared with pigs of Ballast should she attempt it, ready to throw in, which I trust will have the Desired effect of sinking her. No Prisoners to be taken, nor are we to suffer our Selves to be taken alive.

In the event of a Gale setting in from the Westward during our operations in Brest, which Possibly may prevent our retreat

through the Gullet, There will be a Ship lying in Douarnenez Bay to give us a chance of Escaping across the Neck of Land.

Desperate service require Desperate acts, And I trust being driven to this resource we should be able to make a good retreat across. The Frigate to commence firing off St. Matthew on discovering the fire in Brest, The Launches of the Squadron to be ready, The Schooner and Cutters up the Gullet. A Frigate to be anchor'd between Camaret an Bertheaume. I have to request when the fire may be plainly Discovered that sky Rockets man be thrown up from the Frigate, to point to the Boats the situation of the Ship. It will be necessary to have Boarding Nettings. A False fire or blue Light set off is a Signal we are coming on board the Ship in Douarnenez Bay, which will be carried in Captain Brisbane's Pocket.

Boats to be near the Shore ready to take off any who may Escape from the Enemy in Crossing.

It is my Positive orders to the Officers in Command of the Fire Ships that they will not on Any Account set fire to their Brigs untill absolutely Grappled with the Enemy.

I hope every Man's mind is compleatly made up to Execute this Service in a Gallant Manner or fall in the Attempt.

You will remember it is not the wish of Admiral Cornwallis, nor the wish of our Country, that any but Volunteers should be sent on this Service. You will therefore have time to Decline going on it, without any Reflection on your Character as a Brave Man, for Officers and Men are very apt on the first Proposal of Enterprize to Volunteer their Services to their Country fearing they are mark'd Men by their Captain if they do not come forward. I beg to assure them, that on this Service I shall be more obliged to them to keep back if they do not feel Themselves ready and Equal to Execute this Service at the Expence of their lives.

C. BRISBANE.

It is evident, by Cornwallis's answer to Melville's letter of September 5th, that he at first intended to allow the venture to proceed without mentioning to his subordinates the grave doubts which the Board of the Admiralty (other than the First Lord) held as to its success :—

“I have had the Honour of receiving your Lordship's Letters of the Fifth. I have a Vessel off the Lizard, to direct the Vessels

mention'd in your Lordship's Letter to me. I can only say that those who plotted the enterprize have not at all fallen off in their zealous expectations of success if the secret is kept. I was obliged to communicate in a distant manner that something is intended to Sir Thomas Graves, which, indeed, He must have known as His Captain is so deeply concern'd. I shew'd, a few days since, some instructions drawn up by Captain Brisbane to a Lieutenant of this Ship who perform'd a boarding Service last summer much to my satisfaction, and I intend should go in. Brisbane told me he had put every thing in the worst light possible. I shew'd this to the Lieutenant and told Him He should go in one of the Vessels. He has appear'd to me ever since to be very much pleased. I intend to go to the advanced Ships and see them all before any attempt is made. It is a daring Service, but I have always been of opinion that much might be done by surprise, and I have formerly thought that our Ships, though superior to all the world at sea, were not always so secure at anchor."

Melville, in response, wrote on September 14th :—

"I can say nothing in addition to my last letter on the subject of our Secret Service, beyond what you will find in the enclosed copy of a letter I this morning wrote to Admiral Young. I am not in perfect good humour on the score of the delays which have taken place, and I will take additional precautions to prevent anything of the kind happening again."

He also encloses a copy of a letter he had written to Admiral Young :—

"As I cannot cure what is past by repining at it, I shall be silent ; but I am satisfied there were unnecessary delays in more quarters than one, otherwise the Vessels from the River would have been down some days sooner, when many other vessels got down. I am really at a loss to suggest ; for, as you justly observe, there will be so much light when the Vessels reach Admiral Cornwallis, he will not think it expedient to make the attempt ; and if the Vessels join him any considerable time before he makes the attempt, it will give rise to speculations and divulge our views. Of course I will be perfectly satisfied with what you do ; but I am rather disposed to think that they should not go further than the Lizard Point till you can ascertain with precision what Admiral Cornwallis's own wishes are. The steps you took in consequence of my last letter are perfectly judicious.

“Let me know that you are in advance on this secret service.”

Cornwallis, in the meanwhile, appears to have after all considered it imperative to acquaint Captain Brisbane with the contents of Lord Melville's letter of September 5th, for on September 17th he writes :—

DEAR BRISBANE,—

Lord Melville, in His last Letter, tells me He had mention'd the intended Secret Service to the sea officers at the board, and from them He has received no encouragement to persevere. They concur in thinking “the enemy must be supine beyond example, and totally negligent of the common vigilance which the commander of a fleet, etc., etc.,” and gives the most remote chance of success.

The opinion of those in office ought, undoubtedly, to have very great weight ; and I would not upon any account have the attempt made unless you, Captains Puget and Campbell, who have so nobly offered yourselves for such desperate Service, should (notwithstanding the length of time which has elapsed and all the circumstances) continue firmly of opinion as to the favourable prospect of succeeding in the enterprise. The least doubt or alteration in your opinions upon the subject would determine me not to allow you to proceed, and it would not in the smallest degree reflect upon your Characters, for which, as the bravest of men, I shall ever have the highest respect ; and happy should I be if at any time it should be in my power to prove it to all of you.

Vice Admiral Young informs me that the Vessels were not out of the River when He last wrote to me, and regrets having sent the *Happy Return* so soon. I have a Vessel off the Lizard upon the look out. Lord Melville, of course, after the opinion of his colleagues, is rather tender upon the subject, and I imagine the delay has only been occasioned by what frequently happens upon such an outfit.

I must beg of you not to communicate the contents of this to any except Captains Puget and Campbell, and to them in the most secret manner.

I am, dear Brisbane, yours most sincerely,

W. CORNWALLIS.

On receipt of this, Brisbane proceeds to consult with the Admiral on board the flag-ship, and after consultation with Captains Puget and Campbell, and telling them what had occurred, it is decided that each of these officers should write separately to the Admiral expressing their views. Here are their letters :—

“ GOLIATH,” OFF USHANT,
Sept. 21st, 1804.

DEAR SIR,—

After I left you this morning I perused and very seriously weighed the subject of your letter, and, having read the contents of it to Captains Puget and Campbell, I conceived the best of all possible methods to obtain a clear and decided opinion from them was for each to write his separate ideas and transmit them to you, that no mistake might arise hereafter from my representation.

I shall now proceed to give you mine, the same reasons that induced me to propose my Plan last War again induced me to mention it this War, that Fire-Ships might enter Brest, do a great deal of mischief to the Enemy, with very little loss to my Country, and I am sure you will do me the justice to believe that I did not adopt this resolution without most maturely weighing every circumstance attending the enterprize.

However, after the decisive opinions that have been given of the impracticability of the Plan by such respectable characters as the Board of Admiralty, I confess that, altho' I am myself as sanguine as ever of Success if the attempt is made, yet I feel a double portion of responsibility in case of my failure (and as it is impossible to command success) will attach itself to me, I have some doubts in that case of what would be the opinion of my Country. In all probability my conduct might be consider'd as having bordered on Temerity—I trust the confidence I feel of executing the Public Service to advantage will, without presuming too much, induce their Lordships to alter their opinion and allow me the gratification of having their full concurrence and leading through all its difficulties. Enterprizes of this nature as well as every other are very uncertain, but when I reflect that none but *Volunteers* are required to execute it, no blame can be attached to those who Sanction the attempt, and I

must again repeat that I am ready to lead the Fire Ships into Brest whenever they arrive, Wind and Tide permitting.

Before I conclude I conceive it an incumbent duty to return you, Sir, my most sincere thanks for the flattering sentiments which you have been pleased to convey to me, and I trust my efforts on this occasion, as well as any other, will be directed from the good of His Majesty's Service.

I have the honour, etc., etc.,

C. BRISBANE.

H.M.S. "DORIS," OFF THE BLACK ROCKS,

Sept. 21st, 1804.

SIR,—

When this service was proposed to me by Capt. Puget I did not offer for it untill I had weigh'd the probable chances for its succeeding as far as my slender abilities would admit, but as I cannot think of setting up my opinion of opposition to that of Officers of so much greater experience and abilities, I must beg leave to observe it becomes extremely delicate to enter on it without the perfect concurrence of the Board of Admiralty ; at the same time I am perfectly ready for this or any service their Lordships may please to order me on. I beg to offer my acknowledgements for your kind attention to me on all occasions, and have the honor to be, Sir, your very humble Servant,

PATK. CAMPBELL.

"FOUDROYANT," OFF USHANT,

Sept. 21st, 1804.

SIR,—

I have, in conformity with Captain Brisbane's wishes, very carefully perused the Letter you have addressed to him on the Subject of the Plan for destroying the Enemy's Fleet in Brest.

When I first had the Honor of offering myself to conduct that particular Service in conjunction with Captain Campbell—Lieuts. Graves, Ussher, Milne and Mends—I concluded that the Plan would have had the Sanction and Approbation of His Majesty's Government before I should have been permitted to embark in it, and that the only Responsibility attached to me would be confined to its Execution.

It was with the same opinion precisely that I volunteered

under the orders of Captain Brisbane for the purpose of carrying a Similar Plan into Effect ; and though I could not help feeling a great degree of Mortification that his priority of Claim from his having suggested such an Enterprize last War deprived me of the principal Command, yet I thought it my Duty as an Officer even under such a Disappointment not to shrink from a Service I had proposed as practicable. Therefore I came forward with the same alacrity as if I had been entrusted with its Management.

This Circumstance will, I hope, point out that I could have only the Good of His Majesty's Service at heart—and I should have gone forward under the firm Conviction, that had it been my fate to have fallen in the Execution of this Service, that my Death would not only have been honorable in a National Point of View, but beneficial to my Children who might hereafter be in the Navy. But these Expectations are certainly in a great measure damped by the decided Opinion of the Board of Admiralty that the Plan does not hold out a probability of Success ; that if under these Circumstances we Should venture an Opinion contrary to their Lordships, and fail in the Execution of the Service, the whole Blame and Responsibility would attach to us, and instead of that honorable Respect, which is generally paid to the Memory of an Officer, when Life is sacrificed in the Service of his Country, we might run the Risk of having our Undertaking blamed as too desperate for the most hardy.

I have only to add that I am ready as are the Officers who originally volunteered under me to go in that, or any other Service You, or their Lordships, shall please to order or Sanction.

As the intended Plan has acquired much Publicity, and there has been some Delay in the Equipment of the Vessels, I still think if they were collected at St. Mary's in Scilly—and the Officers who are to conduct the Enterprize allowed to join them there—that the Attempt might be successful in about Two Months or upwards, as by that time the Plan will cease to be a Subject of Conversation.

I have the Honor, etc., etc.

PETER PUGET.

In Captain Puget's letter it will be observed that although he resented, as its originator, having the command of the enterprize taken from him, he nevertheless was ready and willing to

do his utmost. At Cornwallis's request Brisbane also consulted the Lieutenants who had volunteered. Their answers are worthy of the highest tradition of the Navy.

From Lieutenant Evelyn: "I receive with pleasure your intimation respecting the Attack to be made on Brest, And in the execution of such a Plan I am ready even to certainty to forfeit my life."

From Lieutenant Rigby: "I am ready to obey any order of Adml. Cornwallis or Capt. Brisbane in which my life may be endangered for the Service of my Country."

From Lieutenant Wingate: "I have the Honor to acquaint you that I am ready to go with you into Brest Harbour and execute my part at the risk of my life."

So much time having elapsed since the scheme was first conceived, and so many people having got wind of it, it was not improbable that the French had heard something too. At any rate, Captain Puget informs the Admiral that "the Enemy had fresh moored their ships more in a line of [for ?] defence." Other fresh difficulties presented themselves. The officers who had come out in command of the fire-ships, directly they heard what was intended, were as desirous, as the volunteers of the Fleet, to risk their lives in the service of their country. Thus friction arose. This, combined with the delay and the probability of the enemy having discovered his intentions, decided the Admiral's course of action. He sent the fire-ships home. Rightly or wrongly, he was not prepared to risk valuable lives in an enterprise, at best fraught with the greatest danger, where not only unforeseen circumstances had by that time seriously diminished its chance of success but, in addition, the majority of the Board of Admiralty were strongly opposed to it as being a fool-hardy venture.

Melville was not satisfied; he considered that Cornwallis should have taken a risk for which he himself was not prepared. His attitude strikes one as unreasonable. He could never have considered the effect his letter of September 5th was bound to have on all those concerned. He wrote on October 10th:—

"I cannot disguise from you that I was much surprised when I heard of the Return of the Fire Vessels to the Downs, and I scarcely think you can have recollected the purport of my letter to you from East Cliff on the 19th August. I gave no explanation

to the Officers sent out with those Vessels that they might be changed, because it was your anxious wish that no Circumstance should take place which might lead to a suspicion of the business they were going upon. On that same ground they were not even fitted out for the Purpose they were intended, but simply as Gun Briggs, and all the combustibles for the fitting them out were put under the charge of Lt. Mylne, the only Person to whom the object of sending them was known, and whom I entrusted because He was one of those you named as destined to be employed in the enterprise. If it had been explained to the Officers sent out that they could not be employed because others had previously volunteered, they could not have been hurt, but would have taken it for granted that I would not allow them to be ultimately sufferers; but even if they had been so unreasonable as to murmur after you had explained to them the contents of my letter to you of the 19th August, it was a matter certainly not to be put in competition with the execution of so important and brilliant a service. If on any other grounds the Officers who had originally volunteered had changed their minds, of that I do not complain, be their reasons for it good or bad; but I do not think any over delicacy to the Officers who were sent out with the Ships was a sufficient reason for laying aside the execution of the Service. I avoid making any observations on the other ground of postponing it, namely, the opinion of my Naval Colleagues not being sanguine in the hopes of success. I thought it fair to you to state that Circumstance to you, but there was no special disapprobation put upon it, and I left it where all such business must ultimately be left, to their own feelings and judgement, recognised by yours. I again repeat that I don't in any degree blame or criticise any of those who volunteered for entertaining a different sentiment from which they formerly did, or of their acting on that sentiment, but I may doubt if the reason for the alteration of sentiment was altogether satisfactory. I need not at present trouble you further upon it; I am not sure if I may not soon have occasion to correspond with you on a business having a similar object, but founded on a different principle as to its mode of execution."

How Melville could have written that his colleagues showed no "special disapprobation" is beyond comprehension. What stronger disapprobation could be shown than to suggest the

enterprise had not "a remote chance of success, unless the enemy must be supine beyond example" ? etc., etc.

Cornwallis replied to this :

"In regard to what your Lordship observes of moving Officers in command to make way for volunteers. Great and important service ought to outweigh every other consideration, but there is nothing more disgusting to the service than it would have been, and the Officers all declared themselves ready to go upon that, or any other service. They will not reason the matter fairly, and, if they give up when going upon immediate service, they are open to the reflections of their brethren, who are not apt to spare them much on such occasions.

"Captain Brisbane was, I assure your Lordship, perfectly ready to the last, and took infinite pains to persuade the Officers in command of those Vessels to make way for those who had volunteered long before.

"The particular service had unavoidably been delayed considerably beyond the time, and Captain Puget had observed that the enemy had changed their position as well as some Gun Vessels. The unfavourable opinion of the sea officers of the Board did also a little damp the ardour of some.

"I shall be most ready and happy in receiving, and putting into execution, your Lordship's commands upon any intended service."

This is the whole story of an enterprise bravely conceived, and which, had it been carried into execution, would, one is convinced, have been as bravely carried out, and in a spirit worthy of the Navy at all times. Whose fault it was that it did not mature is a matter of opinion. One cannot, however, disguise the fact that Melville failed to make the big decision at the critical moment, and tried to shift the responsibility on to other shoulders.

relieving or reinforcing the Blockading Squadron off Brest, and may be called upon for that purpose whenever the Commander in Chief shall think proper, or whenever any of his Fleet may proceed to the Coast of Ireland for Refreshment. Upon such occasion an equal Number of the Irish Squadron will immediately be ordered to join the blockading Fleet, and continue with it until the return of the Ships, whose place they may have supplied in the blockading Division.

The *fourth* Disposition is the Channel or Atlantic Fleet ; and this is divided under five Heads—viz. Brest Squadron, Rochefort Squadron, Ferrol Squadron, Streights Mouth Squadron and Irish Squadron. The whole consists of 44 Ships of the Line, with a proportionate Number of Frigates (The disposition of the frigates and inferior ships and vessels of war is left to the Admiral Commanding in Chief) and Light Cruizers attached to them, and this Force is under the Command of Admiral Cornwallis, who has with him three Vice and three Rear Admirals.

The Division under the Commander in Chief's immediate command allotted for the Blockade of Brest consist of 20 Sail of the Line ; but allowing for Casualties and Refitments, it is probable that not more than 16 may be constantly with Him ; but which (considering that of the 44 Ships under his Command, 13 are three Deckers of from 98 to 110 Guns each) may be supposed to be perfectly adequate to the defeat of the Enemy's Fleet at Brest should it put to Sea, tho' it is now estimated at 21 Sail of the Line : Three of these only are however of Three Decks, and the whole are said to be miserably manned.

In addition to the Safety and Advantage derived by this Country from the Blockade of the Port of Brest, and from the prevention of the Movements of the Enemy's Fleet now there, the whole of the Commerce going out of and coming into the British and St. George's Channels is protected and secured against his Hostility ; and not only the Coast within the Channel, but the whole Coast of the United Kingdom without the Channel is protected against Invasion, which however, without this Arrangement and regular Blockade, must be constantly in a state of Danger, and the Inhabitants of the United Kingdom in perpetual Fears and Apprehensions of the Approach of the Enemy.

The Two Divisions allotted for Rochefort and Ferrol are to

be composed of the best and most effective Ships of the Atlantic Fleet in every particular. They are to be prime Sailers and so completely equipped as to be perfectly fit to pursue the Divisions of the Enemy's Fleet that are now in the ports of Rochefort or Ferrol, to any distant quarter, should they push out from those Ports with such an Intention, and his Majesty's Squadrons should not be able to come up with and bring them to immediate Action.

I have now fully detailed the distribution of our Naval Forces on this side the Atlantic, and I have made such observations upon the different Dispositions of the Fleet as appeared to me requisite to justify Completely the arrangement that has been made. With this impression on my Mind, and viewing with peculiar Satisfaction the means we have thus at our disposal, I trust that the British Empire will be found to be secure against any Attempts of our Enemy.

MELVILLE.

In October of this year the threat of a descent upon Ireland again occupied the minds of the British Government. It had never been lost sight of, but the continued strenuous preparations at Ferrol on the part of the Spaniards and fresh activities at Brest all went to show that an expedition was intended for somewhere, and Ireland was considered the most probable point to be attacked. Melville himself was now quite of this opinion, for, writing privately to Cornwallis in October, he said :—

“Of late there has been a good deal of Agitation and restlessness in Ireland, from which we conjecture that the disaffected Spirits in that Country have recently received some additional Assurances of support from France. You probably will be likely to know sooner than any Person when there are any Appearances in Brest Harbour indicative of any effort to get from thence. But indeed, independent of any Intelligence, I never have had a doubt that if an Attempt seriously to invade the King's Dominions at Home is meant to be made, the Object must be Ireland. And therefore not only from that cause, but from an earnest desire on my part that every Species of Security and every feeling of Security should be given to that Country, I have resolved to make a great Exertion to afford them an additional Naval Protection. As Brest is the place to be chiefly

watched, I remain in the Opinion I formerly conveyed to you, that exclusive of the Blockades of Rochefort and Ferrol, you must never have less than a blockading Force of 16 Sail of the Line under your immediate Command for watching the Movements of the Brest Fleet. In the Paper of Distribution I confidentially communicated to your perusal, you will perceive that I had it always in Contemplation to have 7 Sail of the Line on the Irish Station, forming a part of the Channel Fleet. It has occurred to me that if it can be accomplished, it would give a considerable Addition to the Feeling of Security in Ireland, if in place of acting as a Port Admiral in Cork, with a few Frigates and Sloops under his Command, Lord Gardner could be placed at the head of a respectable Force specially appropriated to the Defence of Ireland, and the Government of Ireland informed that this additional Security was intended for them. I should wish this Force to be not less than Ten or Twelve Sail of the Line; but my Means do not as yet admit of my appropriating such a Force—at least to remain permanently; But I have an Idea that unless the Preparations of the Spaniards go on more rapidly than they appear to do at present in Cadiz, we may soon be able to put under Lord Gardner's Command Ten Sail of the Line; and if other Ships now refitting come forward quickly, perhaps a Force to that extent may be provided for Him, even if the Preparations at Cadiz should render it necessary to have his Force for a while diminished, by withdrawing for the Blockade of Cadiz a few of the Ships at first put under his Command.

“If by the Exertions we are making we shall be able to keep your Blockading Squadrons at Brest, Rochefort and Ferrol equal to what I formerly stated, and at the same time to create an additional Fleet to cruize and be ready to receive the Enemy on the Coast of Ireland, I cannot help thinking that an Attempt to invade Ireland must be a very desperate Undertaking, and can only end, if attempted, in the Ruin and Discomfiture of their Fleet.”

One of the Duc de Bouillon's agents had provided the information from Brest:—

“Information has reached me from Brest of the 14th inst.,” he wrote in November, “that *Nine* Sail of the Line, *some frigates* and *Storeships*, particularly destined for an early expedition, had received on board from 20 to 24,000 Men (*‘de toutes Armes’*).

The Storeships, a large proportion of entrenching tools, and Chests of spare Army Clothing, accoutrements, and money, which from all circumstances my correspondent could collect, are destined for Ireland. The Irish Legion commanded by a Divisionary General (the Rebel O'Connor) is among the Troops embarked."

This information was corrected on the following day. The Duke wrote that the number of men mentioned should be reduced by nearly half, that the error was committed by "our hasty reading of the Cypher confused in the washing of the sympathetic ink." There were efficient chemists even in those days!

Without waiting for this apparently definite information, Cornwallis had already been instructed the previous month to further deplete his own fleet, and to reinforce Lord Gardner at Cork with a squadron of five line of battleships under Lord Northesk. He at once pointed out the danger of weakening the blockade by diminishing the number of ships engaged in this operation. Melville, in his reply, hints for the first time at the possibility of advantage to be gained by relaxing the blockade. Lord Barham (at this time Sir Charles Middleton), who was now at the Admiralty, may have inspired the idea. The letter reads:—

"I have received your letter of the 21st Ult., and nothing can be more satisfactory to me than to receive the confidential communications of respectable officers serving under my orders, and I trust if I am not able to administer to your Wishes to the extent you suggest, you will believe it is neither from want of deference to your Opinion nor a want of inclination to listen to it, but from a deficiency of means to supply what you suggest. No exertion shall be omitted, and I hope with success, to bring forward additional Ships of War, but till that can be done it is necessary to make the most of those we have by a judicious arrangement and distribution of our Force. Nobody is better competent to judge of the truth of what I allude to than yourself, for you know perfectly how many of the Ships I found in commission when I came into office have been sent in such a condition as to require to be broken up or put into dock; and it is physically impossible that, by any means in my power, I could, as yet, have been able to bring forward substitutes for them. With every disposition, therefore, to increase your Force to the utmost of my Power, I do not feel myself warranted to hold out immediately any con-

siderable addition to the number of sixteen I have proposed to be constantly with you. To have a force always effective to that amount of course requires several more to supply accidents or replace those who may be obliged from any circumstance to come into port. I trust however this supernumerary force need not be so large as it must be, if the system of unremitting Blockade was to be adhered to ; but as that, by your orders and instructions as lately transmitted, is considerably relaxed, an opportunity will thereby be afforded to you of furnishing your fleet with those articles of provisions, and replenishing, which might otherwise have rendered it necessary for them to come into port.

“I observe what you state relative to the policy of relaxing the strictness of Blockade formerly resorted to. I admit the *Chances* of what you state, but, on the other hand, I cannot shut my eyes against the *Certainty* of what we must all experimentally know, that you have not the means of sustaining the necessary extent of Naval Force, if your ships are to be torn to pieces by an eternal conflict with the elements during the tempestuous months of winter, and allow me to remind you that the occasions when we have been able to bring our Enemy to Battle and our Fleets to Victory have generally been when we were at a distance from the Blockading Station. I am perfectly aware of the peculiar situation of Ireland, and how much it requires to be specially attended to, but I believe it cannot be better done than by helping your Fleet in a sound and effective Condition, appropriating (exclusive of the Fleet stationed off Brest) at the same time a separate force for the protection of Ireland, to guard against the chance of an invading force under a detachment from the Fleet in Brest Harbour, making an abrupt departure from Brest during the time the Fleet under your command is obliged from weather to leave the Blockading Station.

“As to the state of the French Fleet in point of manning it is a point certainly incapable of being precisely ascertained, but I am led to believe it is inadequately manned from various circumstances. In the first place, although the French got back at the Peace a great number of their Seamen, they have since had very little commerce, and without that source to feed it there will always be infinite difficulty to furnish the supply of Seamen to any Fleet. Secondly, it must be recollected that those immense flotillas to which they have turned so much of their attention

must exhaust the great body of their Seamen. And, lastly, I understood, by the Reports which came from your own fleet, that when, in the course of the summer, ten or twelve of the French fleet came down Brest water, apparently with a view to sailing, they were obliged to man that detachment of their Fleet by taking a considerable portion of the Men from the remaining Ships."

Unfortunately neither the original nor the draft of Cornwallis's letter which brought forth this answer from the First Lord is in existence, but it had the desired effect, as the orders to reinforce Gardner were cancelled. That distinguished naval historian, the late Sir Julian Corbet, wrote :—

"In the end, as we know, Cornwallis had his way, and the verdict of history has been to approve the decision for its moral effect alone" [*Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 179].

There was a tendency at this time on the part of some of the members of the Board of Admiralty to interfere with the Admiral's dispositions, but Melville appears to have placed implicit confidence in his judgment. One of the matters which seems to have worried their Lordships was the practise of employing line of battleships with the inshore squadron. Writing in October, Melville said :—

"When I was at the Board of Admiralty this morning they mentioned to me their opinion that the following instruction is one they were very desirous to send you. The ground of their opinion is that, when you are at Torbay, or when you are at a distance from Brest with the great body of your fleet, the inshore squadron can only be of use to watch the enemy, and not to fight them, and therefore smaller ships are equally available for that purpose as large ones, and far preferable, in so far as they are not liable to receive the same damage as the large ships are. I did not pretend to have any opinion different from my naval colleagues on such a subject, but, before I give my concurrence to send it out as an official order, I wish to know what are your sentiments on the subject."

Cornwallis appears to have agreed with the suggestion as far as it applied to the winter months. He replied :—

"I have not the smallest objection to discontinue the Line of Battle Ships advanced off Brest during the winter. It was proposed to me a few weeks ago by Sir T. Graves.

“The small ships and Vessels will of course be driven away, and not permitted to remain very near the shore without ships of force at hand to support them. But the danger of our not joining would be serious, should the Enemy come out in force, and this has been remarked as a reason against dividing the squadron. During last winter I frequently found what were called the inshore ships further from Brest than those with me. The officer in charge of those ships should have a particular turn for that kind of service. Lord St. Vincent establish’d it chiefly to watch a squadron of the Enemy intended to be detached.”

But when it came to the suggestion that he should occupy Douarnenez Bay for the purpose of anchorage, he resolutely opposed it. The idea originated with Captain Hurd, who had been employed in making a survey of the Bay of Brest : it seemed to have greatly impressed the Board of Admiralty. Melville wrote privately to Cornwallis late in October, and strongly recommended it, sending at the same time a copy of Captain Hurd’s report. “I have,” he said, “given the subject the most mature Consideration, and have determined to send Captain Hurd to you with as little delay as possible, in order that you may send Him, with such other Officer or Officers as you may think proper, into the Bay, for the purpose of ascertaining beyond all doubt whether the Opinion is correct which he entertains of that Anchorage being sufficiently commodious and secure for the Fleet under your Command in every Contingency.

“In corroboration of the Sentiments expressed by Captain Hurd, I find an unequivocal Opinion is given by R. Admiral Knight, and as I am perfectly satisfied of the Reputation and Experience which those Gentlemen possess as Nautical Surveyors, I am consequently induced to entertain a favourable Consideration for their Suggestion ; but notwithstanding this, you must be aware that the Adoption of such an important Measure is of too weighty a nature for me to think of, unless their Opinions shall be placed beyond all Question, and shall be concurred in by You, whose duty it will be to carry on the Project into effect, should it be proved to be perfectly practicable. . . .

“It is quite unnecessary for me to expatiate upon the importance of such an Acquisition as this Anchorage would be at this Crisis, as it must be equally obvious to you as it is to me ; for

should we be able to avail Ourselves of such a Retreat for the whole of your Fleet as this Bay is represented to be by Admiral Knight and Captain Hurd, the Port of Brest must henceforward be so completely and effectually locked up by our taking such a Position as to render the Chief Naval Arsenal of the Enemy of little or no further Annoyance or Apprehension of The King's Subjects; but, with these and all the other most desirable Considerations which present themselves, I cannot presume to give Countenance to the Adoption of a Measure of such magnitude until the Correctness of it shall be decidedly unquestionable."

The letter concludes by asking for "a detailed statement" from the Admiral of the opinion he "might form thereon." Cornwallis, however, did not share Melville's enthusiasm, nor did he agree with the conclusions Admiral Knight and Captain Hurd had come to on the subject, and said so pretty bluntly. Part of his reply reads:—

"Captain Hurd observes, it being a well established fact that the ships in Brest Harbour cannot move from their anchors during the continuance of westerly winds, and it being also equally well known that, with all winds favourable for the enemy to leave their port, it is perfectly practicable for our fleet to keep their position close in with Brest, either by coming to an anchor or by keeping under way close in with the land.

"In the latter part of the observation I do not at all agree.

"Is it meant that the whole squadron should anchor off the Black Rocks, as a few chosen two Decked Ships have occasionally done when called the advanced squadron? Some of our bravest Captains in the Last War, I have been told, got into three Deck'd Ships to avoid such service; and would Captain Hurd place the whole squadron chiefly composed of three Deckers in such an alarming situation?

"As to the whole of the squadron keeping under way within Ushant, with strong Easterly winds at any season, but particularly in the winter, when there is so little day light—that surely cannot be meant. Off Ushant, with an Easterly wind, there is no certainty of being able to keep your Station when it blows hard, and the ships on such post carrying their sail, they must, of course, drift to the Westward; and I have been informed that, Last War, when Lord Bridport and Lord Gardner have been

cruizing off Ushant, they have, at times, been driven 50 and even 70 Leagues to the Westward.

“ Since I last sail’d from Torbay, it blew so hard from the Eastward as to oblige us for two nights to be under our storm sails ; and with every exertion, knowing how very important it is for us, at the present moment in particular, not to be driven off our Station, we have unavoidably found ourselves 15 Leagues to Leeward.”

This letter gives some idea of the difficulties attending the maintenance of a close blockade under conditions so totally different to those of the present day. Captain Hurd’s suggestion was not acted upon.

CHAPTER X

1804

THE war clouds which had been hanging over Spain ever since the outbreak of hostilities between France and England finally burst in October of this year. Spain was "Between the Devil and the Deep Sea." On the one side Napoleon was doing his utmost to push her into the arena; on the other, her previous experience of war with the British nation was not encouraging. St. Vincent's victory was too fresh in the minds of the Spaniards to have diminished their wholesome respect for the British Navy. It was, however, England who finally forced war upon her by an act of aggression, which historians have generously described as "a breach of international law," but which, in fact, was nothing less than an act of piracy.

The British Government's principal grievance was that Spain had permitted her neutrality to be outraged by allowing the French to march troops through Spanish territory to Ferrol, where, as has been already shown, an expedition was being fitted out for an attack against either England or Ireland; the latter being considered the real objective.

In September of this year Cornwallis had received definite orders from the Admiralty to instruct Rear-Admiral Cochrane [Sir Alexander Cochrane, youngest son of the eighth Earl of Dundonald], who had taken over Pellew's command before Ferrol, not only to continue to blockade that port "with the utmost vigilance," but to prevent Spanish as well as French men-of-war from leaving it. The order goes on to say:—

"You are to send intimation to the Spanish Government through Rear Admiral Cochrane of the Instructions you have given to the Rear Admiral, and of your determination in consequence thereof to resist, under the present circumstances, the

sailing either of the French or Spanish Fleets, if any attempt for that purpose should be made by either of them.

“And whereas information has been received that some Frigates are speedily expected to arrive at Cadiz loaded with Treasure from South America, You are to lose no time in detaching two of the Frigates under your Command, with Orders to their Captains to proceed with all possible dispatch off Cadiz and the entrance of the Straits, and to use their best endeavours in conjunction with any of His Majesty’s Ships they may find there, to intercept, if possible, the Vessels in which the above mentioned Treasure may be contained, and to detain them until His Majesty’s Pleasure shall be further known.”

In connection with this order it is of interest to remember that when Nelson heard of it through Captain Gore (an officer serving under him), he gave implicit directions that it should not be obeyed, although Cornwallis was senior to him. Like Pellew he did not wish to see relations with Spain broken, and it was only when he himself received direct orders from the Admiralty that he allowed the original order to be carried out. About the middle of October the treasure ships in question were seized, one of them was sunk with loss of life, including some illustrious Spanish passengers. The direct result of this nefarious action on the part of the British Government was a declaration of war by Spain some six weeks later. In view of what had happened, war with Spain was considered a certainty ; Marquis Cornwallis, in a letter to the Admiral, mentioned the fact :—

“A Spanish war is much talked of,” he wrote in October, “which would I have no doubt be a very popular measure with the Navy. We certainly have enemies enough, but the Spaniards must so heartily detest the French that they can never cordially co-operate with them.”

Doubtless “The wish was father to the thought.”

Writing privately to Cornwallis, and enclosing a copy of Captain Gore’s report on the state of the Spanish Fleet in Cadiz, Melville said :—

“I should not think it probable that the Spaniards are as ready at Cadiz as Capt. Gore’s letter represents ; but the safest side to err upon is to be on our guard, for the Spaniards will be angry, and will make every exertion.”

What an amazing deduction ! Of course the Spaniards were

angry, what else could have been expected; and of course they made every exertion to revenge themselves for the loss of a huge amount of treasure, of which the following is a summary:—

3,166,840 dollars silver
1,269,669 dollars gold
4,732 bars of tin
1,735 ingots copper
26,925 seal-skins

besides a valuable cargo of spices, oil, etc., etc. The haul might have been still greater had not the *Sabina* (one of the convoy attacked) escaped: she carried a further 3,537,000 dollars.

Britain at this date was not only “Mistress of the Seas,” she was tyrant of them as well.

Before the actual declaration of war, Godoy, otherwise known as the Prince of Peace, and who occupied the dual position of being the King of Spain’s friend and minister, as well as his Queen’s paramour, issued a defiant manifesto. A copy of this was sent to Cornwallis. It must have convinced Melville that the Spaniards *were* angry. Parts of it are worth quoting, as they probably echoed the natural sentiments of all patriotic Spaniards. Referring to the act of aggression which precipitated war, it says:—

“But at what time have they made these robberies and Treachery? At a time when our Sovereign had given permission of Trade to English Ships, and at a time of giving every possible succour to their Ships of War. What Indignity on the one part, and what Nobleness and good Action on the other! Seeing these bad actions, is there a Spaniard who will not be enraged? Is there a Soldier who will not bear Arms? Seamen, 300 of your Brothers are killed and a Thousand are made prisoners by treachery; they call on you to save their Honor. Soldiers, the same number of your Comrades are disarmed with Dishonour, and deprived of their Colours; they have been sent into a Desert Island to suffer hunger, and to take part with the Enemy—the same call you to your Duty.

“Spaniards, several peaceable fishermen incapable of defending themselves, seeing their wives and families in the greatest misery, utter imprecations on the Author of their Ruin, and call

upon you equally for aid, and merit your Compassion. Several Thousand families, looking in this present miserable year for nourishment for their families, and obliged to behold themselves unfortunately deprived of it, Cry Vengeance! 'Vengeance! Let us rise and take that Vengeance the King commands, and Honor and Justice undertake it.'

"If the English have forgotten to recognise that Blood which has flowed in the Veins of the Spaniards, the same who have overcome Carthaginians, Romans, Vandals and Moors, we have not forgotten it; and have existing the Glory of our glorious Ancestors, and in the length of Time the World will see the great number of Castillian Heros augmented. . . .

"If the English respect Honour, they ought not to have permitted the Actions in the late Occurrences. By ignoring the Formalities practised by civilized Governments, they have only sought to enrich themselves with any Treasure that may pass before their hands, and believe they have committed such Actions with Justice. The Spaniards will prove to them that such practise is but to make an irregular use of their force, and that Despotism has ever been the ruin of Governments. Their prizes are stained with the blood of innocent Victims; it will be an eternal Dishonour, and will be seen with an evil Eye by all the World. . . .

"Nations with a smaller force than ours and in situations more critical have happily overthrown a greater force, and established Glory upon the Imprudency of those who sought to tamper with their rights."

One of the immediate results of Spain's declaration of war was the formation of a squadron for the purpose of blockading Cadiz. This task was entrusted to Vice-Admiral Sir John Orde. This officer, who had fallen out with St. Vincent, had not been employed during the latter's administration at the Admiralty, but upon Melville taking office he applied for employment; and appears to have taken it for granted that Cornwallis would be delighted to have him in the Channel Fleet. It will be shown how Sir John Orde was severely criticized by Nelson and others at a later period of the war. Melville himself appears to have been doubtful as to the wisdom of giving Orde a command, for he had written privately to Cornwallis a few months before:—

“You are no stranger to the terms on which Sir John Orde was with Lord St. Vincent. He is naturally very anxious to get into employment now that Lord St. Vincent is not in his way, and either by Himself or His Brother, Lord Bolton, has made to me various propositions for that purpose. Among others He urges being put on Service in the Channel Fleet, and states that such an arrangement, from the habits you are upon, he is convinced, would be extremely agreeable to you ; under such Circumstances People are apt to deceive themselves !

“I am not sure that at any rate it would be in my power to gratify him in this wish, but before I take his Proposition even under consideration it is necessary as a Preliminary with me to know how you feel about it. You need not be under any uneasiness in giving me your feelings without any reserve, for although I may act upon them, He nor anybody shall know the authority on which I proceed. If I decline his request it shall be entirely an act of my own.”

Spanish preparations went on apace, but supplies of food were short. Cochrane, writing in November to Cornwallis, said :—

“These places [Ferrol and Corunna] are so much in distress for flour that they are obliged to pay the troops in money instead of using the usual rations of bread.” In the same letter he stated that “the Spaniards continue to allow us to receive fresh beef and other supplies from the shore.” This, in view of their own shortage, which was a point especially emphasized in Godoy’s Manifesto, appears extraordinary. A few days later another report from the same source was to the effect that :—
“There has been sent within these few days a quantity of money to pay the troops in Ferrol—they having a great deal due—and which had the desired effect of quieting them, being nearly in a state of mutiny for want of provisions as well as pay.”

Cornwallis was undoubtedly beginning to feel the strain upon his health which the stress of his position demanded. He mentioned it in one of his letters to Mrs. Whitby, and said how he dreaded “the coming winter if it is to be anything like as severe as the last.” His brother the Marquis also felt a doubt as to the possibility of a man of the Admiral’s age being able to stand another winter at sea. In one of his letters he said :—

“Nothing will prevent your being exposed to many heavy gales this winter, of which we have already had some smart specimens. That you may have health and strength to support the severe service which is imposed upon you is the most sincere and anxious wish of your most Faithful and truly Affectionate Brother.”

Cornwallis felt in duty bound to warn the First Lord of the possibility of a breakdown in his health in order that the necessary arrangements for a successor might be made beforehand. He received a very charming letter in reply :—

DEAR ADMIRAL,—

I have received your private Letter ; and I am perfectly aware of the impossibility of any Constitution standing the Buffetings you have undergone for so long a tract of Time, and I am likewise aware of the necessity there is for attending to the Suggestion you have made to me, of providing for the temporary Command of the Channel Fleet under such a Contingency. In considering this Subject nothing can be further from my Intention than to depreciate in any respect the brilliant Talents which adorn the British Navy, but you need not be informed of the importance which the Public naturally attaches to the Command of the Channel Fleet. Under that impression, my Wish is, that the Command should belong either to you or to Lord Gardner. It is still my Intention, as soon as I can, to enable His Lordship to hoist his Flag with the Command of a Squadron off the Coast of Ireland, and he will be at the same time instructed, on receiving Intimation from you that you mean for any time to remain on Shore, immediately to repair to the Rendezvous of the Fleet, and to take upon Himself the Command thereof, leaving his own separate Squadron during his Absence under the Command of the Officer next in Rank to Him on the Irish Station. But he will be at the same time instructed, at any time you may rejoin your own Fleet, to retire from the Command of it, and to reassume the Command of his own Squadron on the Coast of Ireland.

I flatter myself, by adopting the Arrangement I have thus detailed, the Channel Fleet will at all times be under the immediate Command of an Officer of such Distinction and Rank as will secure the Confidence of the Public, at the same time that it

provides for your Accommodation at any time you may find it necessary or convenient to relax from the unremitting Severity of the Duty in which you are engaged.

I am, dear Admiral, yours, . . . etc., etc.,

MELVILLE.

In a letter written about the same time Melville asked a personal favour of the Admiral on behalf of his son-in-law, the Chief Baron of Scotland, who was desirous of spending the winter in Madeira and required transportation there. He said :—

“I don’t chuse to give any official orders on a subject so nearly connected with my own personal comfort, but I have used the freedom to request you to forward what I wish. Admiral Gambier will take care that he is accommodated with a passage in a Ship of War ordered to join you, and when you know of his arrival I would take it as a Particular favour if you would order some frigate to receive him quietly on board, and the frigate directed to cruise towards Madeira, and to return immediately to her Station or anywhere else you may think proper to order her.”

Was this excusable in view of the known shortage of frigates and the constant call upon their services? Melville must have known his wish would be treated as an order.

Cornwallis had written his favourite niece, Elizabeth Cornwallis [the Bishop of Lichfield’s daughter], telling her of the arrangements made should he feel unable to stand the hardships of another winter at sea. She was a wise woman and wrote her uncle some very sound advice :—

“Your letter of Saturday last has just reached me. I do not like the naval part at all. I cannot help fearing by this intended arrangement that, though you may come when you please, it will not be so easy to resume the command at a better season. It is very extraordinary that the Chief should not know the constitutional character, I may call it, of officers so high in professional rank. I have no idea of a hypochondriac Admiral’s keeping such a fleet to work through a long winter, and then, if anything goes wrong, it will be said that you should have stayed. I almost wish you could brave it.

“James says that Addington vows he will never speak to Pitt again ; the lie of the day, very likely, as its news often proves.

“ I am going to the ball to-night for the first time, with Lady Fielding and a pleasant party.”

The hypochondriac Admiral was, of course, Lord Gardner, who was very much given that way. Cornwallis took his niece’s advice, as, although the winter before him proved to be almost as severe as the previous, he stuck to his post through the whole of it.

Another letter written by Elizabeth a fortnight later is of interest. It speaks for itself and needs no comment, except that her own “ tiny sorrows ” to which she refers were caused by her having been jilted by a certain Mr. Warde Jackson, to whom she had been engaged for a considerable time :—

“ I went yesterday to call upon a good lady, a Lichfield clergyman’s wife, and who should there be upon her sofa but Lady Nelson, with a lameness like a sprain, by her manner of walking, which she immediately did out of the room, poor creature ! I felt ashamed of my red eyes for tiny sorrows in comparison with hers, and longed to support her down the stairs, had I not been a stranger to her.”

CHAPTER XI

1805

MANY times during the winter Cornwallis was driven off his station by heavy gales. Sometimes he made for Torbay, but there were occasions when the wind was so changeable that even that anchorage was not safe. In one of his letters, written to the Admiralty in January of this year, he said : “ It [the wind] has been so unsettled as to oblige me to keep the sea.”

In another about the same time :—

“ The gales have continued with a few hours’ intervals for a fortnight, and as we were seldom able to carry any sail, and a very great sea, I was with the squadron driven far to the westward, and the ships have laboured very much. Both the *Ville de Paris*’s tillers have given way.”

To be tossed about the Bay of Biscay in a 2,000-ton sailing ship in heavy gales for weeks at a time, with practically nothing but salt food, must, indeed, have been a “ dog’s life.”

In the *Naval Chronicle* of the period there appeared :—

“ The rudder of the *Ville de Paris*, of 110 guns, the Hon. Admiral Cornwallis, being faulty and defective, was yesterday unshipped in Cawsand Bay, and towed by the Dockyard Launches through the Sound, up Hamoaze, alongside the Jetty, to be repaired ; and, from the exertions making by the different artificers of the Yard, it will be ready to be sent off to the *Ville de Paris*, and reshipped again soon, to enable the gallant Veteran to resume his Station off Brest. On his arrival in Cawsand Bay, the proper signals being made from the signal-post at Maker, Vice-Admiral Young and Rear-Admiral Sutton saluted him with seventeen guns, as Commander in Chief of the Western Squadron, which he returned with fifteen guns ; drily observing, there was not any occasion for all this fuss and ceremony on his being obliged to come into Port to refit. He will not accept any

invitation on Shore, as the Service requires his attention on board his own Ship. The Port Admirals, and all the Officers of rank in both the Army and Navy, in Port and Garrison, have been on board the *Ville de Paris*, to pay their respects to the veteran Cornwallis, on his arrival at this Port."

Spain had not actually declared war until December 13th of the previous year. It is possible that she purposely delayed the declaration in order that some of her richly laden merchantmen might get safely into port. Seeing that the British Government had precipitated hostilities in the manner described in the last chapter, it is curious that Pitt did not go the whole way and declare war himself. It would not have been difficult to find a pretext, and further rich prizes would have accrued. It does seem strange that, after the capture of the treasure ships, already referred to, the English should have developed qualms about the capture of others: yet it was so. In one of the many reports to Cornwallis from the Captains of his frigates, one officer wrote describing the chase of four large Spanish ships, and concludes by saying: "They were from the Havana richly laden, but not with a cargo to justify their detention." The only cargoes which the Navy were allowed to confiscate between October and December were military stores and equipment.

The acquisition of the Spanish Navy materially increased Napoleon's strength at sea, at any rate on paper. England, armed to the teeth, was in a fever of expectation. The invasion, threatened for so long, seemed about to materialize. A move in the game was hourly awaited: it came from Rochefort. Sir Thomas Graves, who was watching this port, had taken his squadron to water in Quiberon Bay.

Missiessy, the French Naval Commander, seized the opportunity to bring out his squadron. The only British ship left to watch was the *Doris*, commanded by Captain Patrick Campbell, who, observing the obvious preparations being made by the French, hastened under press of sail to warn Graves, leaving the schooner *Felix*, which he had fallen in with, to continue observation. His Admiral, however, had already sailed before his arrival. Campbell at once attempted to follow; this was on January 11th—it was on the 8th that he had first observed the French preparations. In his report, a copy of which was sent to Cornwallis, he said:—

“On the morning of the 12th I spoke an American, who informed me he had been boarded by one of the Squadron [he referred, of course, to the French squadron] the day before and had seen it at two that morning.”

Campbell felt at all costs he must get the information to Graves; but luck was against him. He continues:—

“Just as the Pilot had assured me the ship was in safely, she struck, but so lightly that I had no idea of her having received any material damage.”

But the *Doris* began to make water fast. When he was in this predicament the *Felix* came up and confirmed the American's information. Campbell grew desperate. His crew worked unremittingly all that night, and by 3 a.m. had mastered the water. A fresh gale had arisen, nothing daunted, he made another attempt to get in touch with Graves. But it was hopeless: the ship was too sorely stricken to stand the buffeting of the seas; she began to fill rapidly, the *Felix* standing by. He continues:—

“I gave over all hopes of being able to save His Majesty's ship, and was under the painful necessity a little after of bearing up for an American schooner for the purpose of saving the people, who was worn out and exhausted with fatigue.”

After getting off the whole of his crew, who were picked up by the *Felix* and the American schooner, he concludes:—

“At 3.0., the water being nearly up to the Lower deck, I set her on fire, and quitted; soon after she blew up.”

Thus it was that Missiessy escaped, without it being known where he was making for. All that the *Felix* could say was that he was steering a northerly course. The last thing that entered into the minds of the Admiralty was that he was bound for the West Indies: yet this was the case. Napoleon's new strategy was to send Missiessy from Rochefort, and Villeneuve from Toulon, to the West Indies—not on any particular enterprise (except the general harassing of British interests and commerce), but that they should double back in the hope of finding European waters clear of those British ships which he conjectured would be sent in pursuit of them; that they should then, jointly with the fleet in Brest, seize the mouth of the Channel, and so allow of his supreme venture, the invasion of England—a plan which to him had become an obsession.

It had been thought perhaps that Missiessy had been driven

back by stress of weather into Brest, L'Orient or Rochefort; but the gales continued for a week, and it was not therefore possible to look into any of these harbours until the weather had abated. When it did, he was not to be found. The counter-move to Missiessy's escape was the immediate dispatch of Calder by Cornwallis with six line-of-battle ships to relieve Cochrane, off Ferrol. This officer was instructed by Cornwallis to pursue Missiessy, whose destination had become suspected through information obtained by Captain Laforey from the master of an American vessel. This man, who had sailed from a small port near Rochefort, stated that it was "the prevailing report that the French squadron was either for the Mediterranean or the West Indies." Cochrane was instructed to glean what information he could from Orde, off Cadiz, and if the French had not gone to the Mediterranean, he was to pursue them to the West Indies, joining up with such British men-of-war as there were on that station.

Missiessy, after committing many depredations in the West Indies and capturing many prizes, safely returned to Rochefort the following May. The Admiralty were naturally annoyed over Missiessy's escape, but what rankled most was his complete disappearance. They censured Cornwallis for not having given them his own opinion as to the correctness or otherwise of the meagre intelligence he had obtained as to the French squadron's destination. Captain Laforey's information they considered as altogether too vague. Unless they went on the principle that a Commander-in-Chief is responsible for every action, good, bad and indifferent, of his subordinates, it is difficult to see how Cornwallis could be blamed. What had happened proved clearly that under certain conditions the French could come out when they wished. They did the same again later, when Villeneuve eventually evaded Nelson and got out of Toulon.

Cornwallis, who had furnished the Admiralty with all the information he himself had received, resented this censure, which he considered unjust.

"Their Lordships observe," he wrote on February 24th, "that the contradictory information hitherto received leaves not only the destination of the Rochefort squadron, but the circumstances of its escape, in a considerable degree of uncertainty. I request you will be pleased to acquaint their Lord-

ships that I should be extremely sorry they did not believe I wished to give them every information in my power, or opinion of it was likely to be of use."

He concludes his letter by administering a polite snub to the members of the Board :—

"I have no other thing to judge from but what I have related, and every person who has seen the accounts I have mentioned is as well able to form an opinion on them as myself."

Early in March of this year Cornwallis applied for six weeks' leave. Except for three weeks the previous summer, he had been at sea for nearly two years. Considering his age, he had withstood the winter fairly well, but he badly needed a rest. He was also anxious to see his eldest brother, who, from a sense of duty, had once more accepted the post of Governor-General of India. He had written the previous January to the Admiral :—

"You will be surprised to hear that I am once more going to Bengal. This task is undertaken by me at the earnest request of the Ministers and the leading men in the Court of Directors ; and when I am told that I may essentially serve my country, and know that by the same means I am likely to assist my family, you will agree with me, I think, that there are few enjoyments or comforts in this world for a man of sixty-six that can be put in competition with these objects."

He wrote again early in March :—

"I have not seen Lord Melville lately, but some time ago he told me you had expressed a desire to come on shore for a time about the end of this month. . . .

"I shall be very glad, if it should so happen, to see you before I take my departure on a voyage rather too long for a man of sixty-six."

The question of appointing a temporary Commander-in-Chief now arose. It will be remembered that Lord Gardner had been decided upon the previous autumn. A letter on the subject from Sir John Colpoys, who was a member of the Board, to Sir Charles Middleton is of interest, and shows how difficult the Admiralty considered it to fill Cornwallis's place even for a short space. It reads :—

"I have not a doubt of Lord Gardner's acceptance of the command for ever so short a period should it be offered him. I

also have no doubt of Admiral Cornwallis feeling hurt should there be another Commander-in-Chief appointed, therefore what is to be done I know not without Lord Melville's writing to him and proposing the measure. I see plainly by Lord Melville's letter that the Government have taken an alarm, and when it was proposed by Admiral Cornwallis to come in, I then said it now remains for their Lordships who should command in the Admiral's absence."

Gardner was appointed, and hoisted his flag on board the *Hibernia* on March 31st.



MRS. WHITBY AT THE AGE OF 35.

*From a miniature by Emma Helena Kendrick in the possession of
the author.*

CHAPTER XII

1805

ON his arrival at Portsmouth Cornwallis at once went to Newlands with Captain Whitby. Mrs. Whitby, as has been shown, was living there. After ten days' leave Whitby returned to duty, leaving his wife under the Admiral's care. The latter's health was very indifferent, as some of Mrs. Whitby's letters to her husband show: in fact, in one she expresses a doubt of his being able to resume his command. She did not at that time appreciate the old warrior's determination and strength of character. Above all, he was out to beat the French and serve his country; health to him was a secondary consideration. It will be remembered how early in April of this year, owing to a report of the Commission appointed to inquire into the abuses which were alleged to exist in the public spending departments, Melville was impeached and obliged to resign his position as First Lord. Sir Charles Middleton, Cornwallis's old friend and correspondent, although over eighty, was created Lord Barham, and appointed in his stead. Writing to him from Newlands on April 28th, the Admiral said:—

I am very glad to find that you have accepted the office of first lord of the Admiralty, and very unwilling indeed I should be to intrude upon you a few lines if I did not almost feel it a duty to state that I came on shore to stretch my legs after near two years' confinement on board. I hope, however, to be able to return (if it meets with your approbation) towards the middle of next month, about which time my leave of absence will expire. That you may, by filling the high and important office in which his Majesty has been pleased to place you, be able to render the most essential service to your country is the most hearty wish of . . . your . . . etc. etc.

W. CORNWALLIS.

It has been suggested that Melville was more the victim of his own carelessness than an actual intent to defraud. The feeling in the Navy appears to have been against him. "Take it altogether," Whitby wrote to his wife, "it is impossible not to feel some sort of Pity for a great man fallen, but we all feel that the transaction is bad at bottom. I can never rightly forgive his conduct to the Admiral, a piece of conduct in which I have, I believe, a more lasting resentment than the Admiral himself. It was, in the first place, his being a part in his prosecution, refusing to answer a letter when he thought the Admiral was down, and, lastly, his shaking both his hands at Court, when the Admiral had command of this Fleet. I twice or thrice said to the Admiral, He is a crafty old Politician, take care of him." There is nothing in Cornwallis's papers to show that Melville, as Henry Dundas, took an active part in supporting Spencer over the affair of the Admiral's court-martial [Melville was Secretary for War at that time]. If he did the latter certainly bore him no ill-will, as his letters and Melville's former visit to Newlands show.

It would seem, too, that the political intrigue to oust Cornwallis from command of the Channel Fleet only started after Melville's loss of office, which would suggest that he was a staunch believer in the Admiral's capabilities, and would listen to no derogatory criticisms against him. That there was a conspiracy against him is certain. Certain influential Tory politicians wished to see St. Vincent in command of the Channel Fleet; there were also a number of naval officers of the St. Vincent school who wished the same. In recent days the only position at all comparable is the Beresford-Fisher controversy of nearly two decades ago: with this difference, whereas the latter was purely professional, the former was entirely political. That politics should ever be allowed to enter the scheme of things when the nation's safety is at stake is almost inconceivable, yet even during the late Great War it was noticeable.

Cornwallis became aware of what was happening. As his return to his command had been postponed by the Admiralty, he wrote for advice to his old friend Lord Hood, who at this time was enjoying a well-earned retirement in command at Greenwich Hospital.

Writing on May 31st, Hood replied:—

"Many thanks, my dear Admiral, for your very affectionate

and confidential Letter of Monday last, and from what you therein state it certainly appears *more* is intended than meets the Eye. Be that as it may, the consciousness of your own mind in having discharged your Duty with persevering Zeal and fidelity must afford you much consolation and comfort, and enable you to bear up against that want of candour and attention your Services must justly entitle you to expect. We live, my dear Admiral, in strange times, and God only knows what is to become of us. It has long since been very clear to my mind that the present State of things in this country is very similar to that of France the years before the Revolution. Our Divisions at home must destroy us, sooner or Later, unless they are healed."

Whitby evidently did not consider that the Admiral was in a fit state of health to take up his command so soon. In another letter to his wife he said :—

"The Admiral's letter is written in a very odd style of Humour altogether: he writes seemingly out of sorts with every-body—Admiralty, Sea-People and every other Person; and professedly says he means to come again to disappoint People who want to get him out. This would be all very well on common occasions, but consider his health! Is it for the cause of our country to have no other object than Pique or Displeasure. If he were well it would be otherwise, and no man would rejoice more than I to see him once more at the head of this fine Fleet! However I have advised him to settle all Points of Difference preliminary to his final movement, and to put himself upon the best footing of confidence and comfort possible."

In April of this year great events were happening in European waters. Villeneuve, after a previous abortive attempt, had evaded Nelson and got through the Straits of Gibraltar into Cadiz. Orde, who was blockading the Spanish Fleet in Cadiz, had been warned by Sir Richard Strachan of the approach of the French Fleet. His immediate retirement at the time has been severely criticized, as it is contended that by so doing he failed to delay Villeneuve, who, ever in constant danger of Nelson's appearance, wasted no time but sailed immediately for the West Indies, and thus forged another link in Napoleon's strategical chain. Orde had retired on the main Channel Fleet. One of Whitby's letters to his wife says :—

"Tell the Admiral the French are in Force everywhere, and

everywhere have come out or shewn a disposition to do so. Sir John Orde joined us a few days ago, having had his quarters beat up by the Toulon Squadron that got through the Straits of Gibraltar; it is among the shames of the Naval conduct of our Country that Sir John was so weak. It is impossible not to exclaim at the shameful disregard that is paid to the Interests of the Country, when the French were notoriously on the move everywhere. But the moves our Politicians seem to be thinking of now are their confounded Places, and so the interests of the Country are neglected."

In the same letters he says how bitterly all naval officers were complaining of having to pay foreign rates upon letters delivered to the Fleet!

Cornwallis's leave expired towards the end of May but, owing to the invasion scare, Missiessy's successful return to Rochefort and Villeneuve's escape from Toulon, it was deemed advisable not to change the command of the Channel Fleet at so critical a moment. At least that was the reason given the Admiral. The real reason was very different. St. Vincent's supporters had got the ear of the King, who sent for him to Windsor. This was on June 21st. After the attacks which Pitt had made against him in the House of Commons, St. Vincent declined to serve under that statesman's Administration unless he received a full and unqualified apology, which, however, was not forthcoming. This is made quite clear in a letter from St. Vincent to Cornwallis, written the following year, which will be dealt with in a later chapter. Whether St. Vincent considered that his services were of such importance as to ensure an apology from the Prime Minister it is not possible to say, nor is it fair to suggest that he was a party to the intrigue against Cornwallis.

On June 30th the Admiral sailed from Lymington in the *Ranger* Sloop for Spithead, where he once more hoisted his flag on board the *Ville de Paris* as Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, which he joined off Brest on July 7th. The next few months were to be the most eventful of his career. He was to be called upon to make decisions which were vital to the safety of his country, decisions the responsibility of which a lesser man might have shrunk from undertaking. It is possible to imagine what were his feelings as he once more trod the quarter-deck of his flag-ship. The French were active everywhere, a move on

a big scale was undoubtedly contemplated. Was the great ambition of his whole career at last to be fulfilled? Was he at last to have the chance of meeting and beating the French with a force adequate to the occasion? His soul pined for this opportunity which, capable and gallant man though he was, had never been vouchsafed him, and even now in the last few months of his service was to be withheld from him.

CHAPTER XIII

1805

THE naval position in the Bay of Biscay and off the coast of Spain, as Cornwallis found it when he resumed command of the Channel Fleet, was briefly as follows : Ganteaume, with twenty-one sail of the line, was still blockaded in Brest by nineteen English battleships. Allemand, who had superceded Missiessy in command of the squadron in Rochefort, had five line of battleships in that port, and was being blockaded by Rear-Admiral Stirling, who had relieved Graves. Gourdon and his Spanish colleague, Admiral de Grandallana, were in Ferrol, which port was being watched by Calder with but nine sail of the line ; farther south Collingwood was watching the Spanish Fleet under Gravina in Cadiz. It was known that Villeneuve had gone to the West Indies hotly pursued by Nelson, but it was not until the arrival of the *Curieux* on July 8th that the Admiralty became aware that he was once more fleeing before Nelson and was on his way back to European waters ; and what was of vital importance was steering a northerly course, which tended to show that he was making for the Bay of Biscay and not to the Straits of Gibraltar or the Mediterranean. It was taken for granted that Nelson would be hot upon his tracks, which, of course, proved correct. The problem to be solved now was how to intercept the French Fleet and destroy it before it could have joined up with the Ferrol, Rochefort and Brest squadrons. This was Napoleon's great strategical plan. Had it materialized before the arrival of Nelson the combined English Fleet would have been slightly inferior in number to the French.

The Admiral became acquainted with the arrival of the *Curieux* and the news she carried almost at the same time as the First Lord. Vice-Admiral Young in command at Plymouth had sent a fast dispatch vessel to warn him of the approach of Ville-

neuve. Cornwallis took immediate steps to put Calder and Stirling on their guard. On July 9th, Barham, before waiting for the official orders to be dispatched, wrote privately to Cornwallis. "If we are not too late," he said, "I think there is a chance of our intercepting the Toulon Fleet. Nelson follows them to Cadiz, and if you can immediately unite the Ferrol and Rocheford Squadron and order them to cruize from 30 to 40 leagues to Nr Westward and stretch out with your own fleet as far, and continue six or 7 days on that Service, and then return to your several Posts, I think we stand some Chance of intercepting them. Official Orders will follow as fast as possible."

This letter reached Cornwallis on July 11th. The official orders arrived a day or two later. The late Sir Julian Corbet, in his account, states that these orders were framed on Barham's minute made early the morning of the 9th in conjunction with his colleagues; he doubts the historian James, who tells us how Barham, when he was called, complained bitterly of not having been awoken earlier, and that he then and there wrote a hasty minute on a piece of paper. Sir Julian says: "It is written at speed with several interlineations on a small scrap of paper in eloquent contrast to the long memorandum which he had just completed" [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 182]. Is it not possible that what he wrote was the draft of the above letter to Cornwallis, and that he sent the actual letter off before he met his colleagues at the Board? Expedition was the sole object in his mind; he felt there was not a moment to be lost. He was the dominating personality at the Admiralty at the time, and rightly felt he could carry his colleagues with him, and obtain their approval to the plan he had adopted to counter this new danger. Whether he told them he had already written to Cornwallis is a matter for conjecture. The whole official order is only about 170 words and embody the instructions contained in the letter. After quoting them word for word, Sir Julian says: "It was all done in about 3 hours. By nine o'clock in the morning the Admiralty messenger was away, and as he thundered down the Portsmouth Road Napoleon was in the act of leaving Turin for Boulogne 'to change the destinies of the world'" [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 184]. It is possible that, unknown to all except Barham, an earlier messenger had done the same and that by the time the

official order arrived at Portsmouth Barham's letter to his trusted friend was well on its way.

Cornwallis's answer to this is taken from a draft in his own handwriting; it will be observed that no mention is made of having received the official Admiralty order; it is dated July 11th and reads:—

"I have this moment had the Honour of receiving Your Lordship's letter dated the 9th and have sent the necessary directions to Rear Admiral Stirling to Join Vice Admiral Sir Robert Calder—and for them to cruise as yr Ld. directs thirty or Forty Leagues Westward to endeavour to intercept the Enemy's returning Squadron.

"I have, since I received the intelligence, kept with the ships present further to the Westward, and intended with a Westerly wind to continue in a position to intercept the enemy—should they make for the port of Brest."

It will be seen from the last paragraph that Cornwallis had already anticipated Barham's instructions so far as his own squadron was concerned. "With his flag he had now a splendid battle squadron of twenty sail, which, including as it did no less than seven three-deckers and three 80-gun ships, was greatly superior to that of Villeneuve and Gravina. His instructions, it will be remembered, as finally drafted were 'to stand to the south-westward 30 or 40 leagues for 10 days' and he interpreted them with a freedom that was obviously intended. At first he stretched about south-south-west 'in a direct line for Finisterre,' as Barham's original orders had provided. This course he held for about 100 miles and then turned up to the north-westward crossing the natural approaches to Brest. . . . So far not a sign of the enemy had been found, and Cornwallis seems to have conceived a strong impression that they were not making for Brest at all. . . . Of all the moves in the Campaign none will seem quite so daring as this" [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 186].

Cornwallis had been called upon to make a vital decision; he had to take a risk and did so without hesitation. There was no object in his going so far south unless he felt certain that Villeneuve was making for some port other than Brest; but by so doing he left Ganteaume free to come out had he wished to. He gambled on two chances. Firstly, that Ganteaume was too experienced a leader to risk a dash up the Channel (which was,

of course, what Napoleon wished for) with an undefeated and superior fleet behind him. Secondly, that he would not at this time of year meet with a northerly gale, which would prevent his getting back to his rendezvous within the time specified by his orders. He was correct in both estimates. On July 22nd he had returned to his station to find the French Fleet still in Brest ; but he was a sorely disappointed man. "The Admiral is out of sorts with everyone and everything," Captain Whitby wrote to his wife on the 24th. "He curses his ill-luck at having met nothing, although we sailed much further south than was originally intended ; says he wishes he was Calder." The last part of this letter shows how certain Cornwallis was that Villeneuve would attempt to pick up the Ferrol squadron before proceeding further north. How right he was. Two days before this letter was written Calder had met and fought Villeneuve. The action although indecisive put an end to Napoleon's scheme for obtaining the temporary command of the Channel and invading England.

It will be remembered how Nelson in his homeward pursuit of Villeneuve was convinced that the latter's objective was Cadiz or the Straits of Gibraltar ; and how, after arriving there and getting no news of the movements of the French Admiral, he decided to come north and join the Channel Fleet. Like others he realized the vital importance of safeguarding the mouth of the Channel. He sent on a fast frigate to Cornwallis to tell him of his intentions.

"My dear Friend," he wrote on July 27th, "the enemy's fleet from the West Indies being certainly gone to some port in the Bay, I am proceeding to the northward with eleven sail of the line. I shall either call off Cape Clear, or proceed direct off Ushant to form a junction with you, as circumstances may in my judgment (from intelligence) require. I shall only hope, after all my long pursuit of my enemy, that I may arrive at the moment they are meeting you, for my very wretched state of health will force me to get on shore for a little while. I am ever, my dear friend, your most faithful and attached, NELSON AND BRONTÉ."

Nelson's first course lay towards the coast of Ireland. On August 13th, when about 150 miles south of Cape Clear, he fell in with the *Niobe*, one of Cornwallis's cruisers three days out from the fleet. According to Sir Julian Corbet, he learnt that Ireland

was in no danger, but that the *Niobe* could report that when she parted company [i.e. from Cornwallis] nothing had been heard of the Combined Squadron in the Bay" [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 240]. This can hardly be correct. Calder's dispatch to Cornwallis telling him of his engagement with Villeneuve was dated July 23rd. It must surely have been received before August 10th, the day the *Niobe* left the fleet. Nelson immediately altered his course, and on the 15th had joined the Channel Fleet. Cornwallis had received previous instructions from Barham to send Nelson home in the *Victory* immediately he fell in with him. Cornwallis knew the precarious state of Nelson's health, and much as the two must have longed to meet and talk over the situation, the latter's health was his old friend's first consideration, consequently he was sent off almost before the sound of the last gun to salute the Commander-in-Chief's flag had died away. Nelson, however, took the opportunity of sending a boat with a letter and some delicacies to the man whom he said had taught him "that we could always beat a Frenchman if we fought him long enough." The letter reads:—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—

Although I have been unlucky yet I am glad the gentry have been trimmed. I wished much to have taken you by the hand. I am sure you have felt for me. *Belleisle* wants going to Port; the others are perfect. I send you their state; I send you a case of Noyau, a jar of Tamarinds and a jar of ginger. I am but very so so, and very indifferent this forenoon. May every success attend you, my dear friend, ever yours faithfully,

NELSON AND BRONTÉ.

This letter suggests that he had already received information from the *Niobe* concerning Calder's engagement.

It will be remembered that Stirling had received orders from Cornwallis to reinforce Calder. This decision necessitated the raising of the blockade of Rochefort, a fact that was immediately taken advantage of by Allemand, a man who proved himself a brilliant leader with twice the resource of any other of Napoleon's Admirals. Directly it was seen that Rochefort was no longer watched, the French squadron slipped out and there commenced a cruise which is one of the romances of naval history. For

months, even after the battle of Trafalgar was fought, the Admiralty were in dread of the harm this elusive squadron might do to British commerce. Its activities were the subject of much correspondence between Barham and Cornwallis, and will be alluded to later.

To return for a moment to Calder's engagement. In his report to Cornwallis he claimed a victory. After describing the tactical manœuvres of both fleets, he goes on to say :—

“This obliged me to make again the same manœuvre, by which I brought on a very decisive action, which lasted upwards of four hours, when I found it necessary to bring to the squadron to cover the captured ships.”

The latter consisted of two old 84- and a 74-gun ship. The weather had been thick the day of the fight, and on the following morning Calder found his fleet scattered. It is questionable whether he could have renewed the engagement, but there is no doubt he was extremely nervous that the French and Spanish Fleet in Ferrol might come out to Villeneuve's assistance. There was nothing to prevent it, and if they had, with some of his ships disabled as they were, the results might have been disastrous. Calder was severely criticized in the public press and demanded a court-martial. He was acquitted of all charges of cowardice, “but was convicted for not having done his utmost to renew the said engagement and to take and destroy every ship of the enemy.” His sins of omission seem far less than Rodney's in 1782 after the Battle of the Saints, when circumstances were much more in the latter's favour than in Calder's. The British public were clamouring for a victory, and were dissatisfied with anything less, hence the public outcry and the necessity for a scapegoat.

CHAPTER XIV

1805

As he foreshadowed in his report, Calder, after his engagement with Villeneuve, retired with Stirling on the main Channel Fleet. This combination, together with the ships that had arrived with Nelson, but after deducting the *Victory* and certain ships sent in with Stirling for a refit, brought the total number under Cornwallis's flag up to thirty-six sail of the line. If it was Napoleon's intention to bring up Villeneuve and the squadron at Ferrol, and, jointly with the fleet in Brest and Allemand's squadron, attempt to force the mouth of the Channel, Cornwallis was in ample strength to meet such a move. But there was another contingency to be considered; that was the possible abandonment by Napoleon of this plan (which was, of course, in conjunction with his scheme of invasion) and alternatively his sending Villeneuve with the main fleet to take the offensive in the Mediterranean, at this time nearly bare of British men-of-war. "What, then, should Cornwallis do? Should he rest content with the control of the invasion theatre: or should he strike to control the whole theatre of the campaign? Should he be satisfied with impregnable defence or should he risk it to deprive the enemy of all initiative?" "The Western Squadron [The Western Squadron was an old name for the Channel Fleet] is the mainspring from which all offensive operations must proceed," Lord Barham was even then writing the words to him, but the letter had not yet arrived. There was not a day to lose; at any time Villeneuve might be moving, and if Cornwallis waited for orders from the Admiralty, it might be too late to act. Surely higher responsibility never rested on an Admiral at sea. Yet there is not a sign of hesitation in the stout old officer. To wait for orders was to abandon the game. In his room at the Admiralty Barham was telling him to strike when he saw the chance, 'with-

out waiting for orders from home ' ; and he did not wait, even for the permission.

" Not for more than twenty-four hours did he hold the concentration. On the 16th, the day after Nelson joined, Cornwallis signed orders to Calder to take eighteen of the line, which, with the *Dragon* and *Goliath* already to the southward, would give him twenty, and proceed off Ferrol there to use his utmost exertion to prevent the enemy sailing again, or to intercept them if they attempted it " [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, Sir Julian Corbet, pp. 246-7].

Cornwallis and the old veteran at the Admiralty were completely in accord. In answer to the Admiral's report as to what he had done, Barham wrote :—

" We have at this moment received yours, and you have entered completely into my views."

Conjecture may be profitless 120 years after an event ; but if Cornwallis had not come to the bold decision to regain the initiative, and check Villeneuve, it is difficult to see how the battle of Trafalgar could have been fought two months later, assuming that in the delay which would have occurred before the Admiralty orders could arrive, Villeneuve, without waiting for orders from Paris, and anticipating Talleyrand's advice to Napoleon, had taken advantage of the strategical situation and had slipped with his fleet into the Mediterranean ; the only alteration that the Admiralty saw fit to make in Cornwallis's dispositions was in ordering him to send Sir Charles Cotton to replace Calder in command of the squadron he had detached. This order was again countermanded, as Nelson was sent out instead.

On August 21st it was reported to the Admiral by his advanced cruisers that the fleet in Brest showed every intention of coming out. Napoleon had taken it for granted that Villeneuve would come north in the first instance and had given precise orders to Ganteaume to keep his squadron in the outer roads in order to be ready for an immediate combination with the former so soon as he should appear in sight. The following account of what happened is taken from a letter of Captain Whitby's to his wife :—

" I think the sight of the little 'rencontre' we had the other day was the most beautiful I have ever beheld, and as I have often said, the Admiral, when he sees the enemy, rises up like the

sun from behind the clouds—all dull and inky vapours vanish. This was, in my opinion, the most officer-like manœuvre possible. The Endeavour he made to coax the Enemy to battle when he found them leaving their anchorage ; his pushing the matter so exactly to the right Point, neither too far or too little, shewed excellent judgement and knowledge. But fancy the British 17 sail to the French 21, within 3 miles of Brest waters, the Hills covered with Frenchmen to stimulate their countrymen ; their ships entirely covered by tremendous batteries on shore, and ourselves giving them a kick as it were by way of a challenge. The Colours flying in the British Line, and the *Ville de Paris* with the Admiral's white Flag leading, was beautiful beyond description. The *Cæsar* had 3 killed and five wounded, owing, I fancy, to the man at the Helm accidentally and unguardedly throwing the ship about, and consequently they directed their shot better while she was thus at a stand. The Admiral very much in the public Confidence of the Fleet, his conduct was so very officer-like. If the *Cæsar* had not been thrown about, I firmly believe the French Rear Admiral, who was the last ship of their fleet standing back again, would have been cut off. They thundered away their shot at our white Flag."

The Admiral's account of this affair was laconic as usual :—"No mischief of any consequence happened to the ships of the Squadron."

He was slightly wounded himself in the action, but did not think it worth mentioning in his dispatch : neither did Whitby in his letter to his wife, probably because that lady had been recently confined of her second child, and he was afraid of upsetting her. Poor old Admiral, again to be baulked of his prey. From what we have seen of his character it is easy to appreciate something of what he felt when he saw the French Fleet ignominiously retreat under the shelter of their own shore-batteries.

After Cornwallis had decided to divide his fleet, he sent two of his fastest frigates, the *Iris* and *Naiad*, in advance of Calder to watch Villeneuve in Ferrol. It was these two ships who discovered that the French Fleet, instead of sailing north to join Ganteaume, had retired south, Cadiz being rightly conjectured as their destination. The *Naiad* went south to warn Collingwood, and the *Iris* to Ushant to acquaint the Commander-in-Chief. Cornwallis immediately issued fresh orders to Calder.

“The enemy,” he wrote, “are most likely bound for Cadiz or up the Mediterranean.” He now felt convinced that neither Ireland or the mouth of the Straits were in any immediate danger ; he considered that if they remained at sea a homeward-bound East India convoy would be their object, and told Calder so. “Go in pursuit of the enemy instead of going off Ferrol,” were the final words of his orders. Villeneuve had no ambition to cruise ; his ships were foul, and his crews sick and dispirited ; his one idea was to get away from Nelson, his bugbear, whom he firmly believed was somewhere near, and in touch with Calder. It is a matter of history how he got into Cadiz only to emerge in October to be defeated at Trafalgar by the man he feared most.

In the meanwhile, where was Allemand ? Cornwallis at first was under the impression he had joined Villeneuve, as, indeed, had been the original intention. The orders to this effect never reached him. A brilliant engagement between a British and the French frigate taking them, in which the former was victorious, was the cause of their miscarriage. Allemand was lost : lost to his friends and his enemies, and for this very reason became a thorn in the side of Cornwallis and the British Admiralty. It was through the *Melampus* that the Admiral first heard that Allemand was at sea and not with Villeneuve ; he knew of the near approach of the homeward-bound convoy and the danger it ran from this phantom squadron, and was apprehensive for its safety ; so was Barham, who wrote on August 28th :

“As the East and West India fleets expected within these ten days are of the immense value of ten millions, and we have no certainty of the Rochefort fleet being in port or at sea, and as we are hurrying out the ships with every degree of possible dispatch to join you, I wish you may be able to contrive it so as to spare four ships and a frigate to cruise in the chops of the Channel for about ten days, for the preservation of these convoys, and take such other measures as may appear to you to be best to ensuring this object.

“The India convoy will have two 64’s accompanying them, and I trust Sir Robert will take care to keep between them and the French squadron. The safety of these fleets must be our first object, and as soon as they have got within the Channel we shall be able to make you strong in all quarters. You may probably be able to stand out for a very short time to the westward

yourself, but this must depend upon information; I therefore leave the whole to your management."

Cornwallis had anticipated the First Lord, and indeed it is remarkable how throughout these anxious months these two great minds thought alike. So soon as he received news of Allemand he never hesitated a moment, but detached a portion of his fleet under Stirling to endeavour to round up this evasive Frenchman. He was not afraid of weakening his own fleet, and felt certain that the remaining ships he had with him were, even if numerically inferior, quite capable of tackling the Brest fleet should it attempt to come out again. After their behaviour but a few days before, his opinion of the French at sea had sunk lower. He wrote to Barham on the 26th: "We had a near view of them the other day, and they seemed to be as well as French ships in general are."

Stirling returned after the expiration of his cruise, having failed to meet Allemand. Cornwallis has been censured for not immediately ordering him to return to the place which the Admiralty had mentioned in their orders, which only reached the Commander-in-Chief after he had already acted on his own initiative in the manner described. Had he done so, in all probability Allemand's squadron would certainly have been rendered harmless, if not destroyed; but as Sir Julian Corbet wrote: "It must be remembered the situation was by no means easy. The probability was that Ganteaume, now if ever would make a desperate attempt to break out and join Villeneuve at Cadiz, and any weakening of the Brest blockade except for high cause was to be avoided" [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 307].

Late in September news of Allemand was again brought to Cornwallis, this time by the *Moucheron*. It was that Allemand was about 100 leagues south-west of the Scillies. "To be flouted in so impudent a manner in the heart of his own station was more than old 'Billy-go-tight' could endure. So strongly did his paramount function assert itself that he boldly determined once more to leave Brest open and do himself what his detachment had failed to achieve. Ganteaume or no Ganteaume, the control of the Channel approach must be secured" [*Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 313]. At the same time Cornwallis sent Sir Richard Strachan across the Bay to Finisterre should Allemand endeavour to work south to join Villeneuve or get into Vigo. Everything that

could be done to round him up was done, but to no purpose. He had the "luck of the devil," and escaped from both Cornwallis and his subordinate.

Writing of this occurrence to his wife, and to apologize for having kept her so long without a letter, Whitby said :—

"The reason why you had not for several days heard from me was that the Admiral stood away with the fleet to the N.W. in search of the Rochefort Squad^{rn}, where we were about 9 days—but took nothing. Who is the Jonah in all these Misfortunes, or rather want of Fortune, I know not. The Admiral is much disappointed, and we all suffer for it !"

Allemand not daring to make a port in the Bay, having got wind of Strachan's presence, made a dash for the Canaries. Here we may leave him for the moment.

With the exception of Allemand's, all the combined fleets of France and Spain were once more bottled up in their harbours, and the combination of events which led up to the Battle of Trafalgar was complete. After this brilliant victory, Collingwood wrote to Cornwallis ; the letter tells of the fierceness of the fight and the death of poor Nelson. It is dated October 26th from the *Euryalus*, and reads :—

"I have the very great pleasure to inform you that the combined fleet was engaged by the British squadron on Monday, 21st, off Trafalgar, and totally defeated, 19 sail of the line taken and burnt. Admiral Villeneuve, the Commander-in-Chief, is now on board the *Euryalus*, where I have hoisted my flag, the better to direct the operations of the squadron, my own ship *Sovereign* being dismasted and a complete wreck.

"The 22nd a gale began which has increased untill to-day, and the prizes being all heavy hulks, with their sides much battered, I really believe they have all sunk—or will.

"Sorry I am to tell you that the noble Commander-in-Chief fell in the action ; but he will live in the memories of all who knew him as long as they have being. This gale has ruined me, and I am under the greatest apprehensions now for my own ships—whether they would be able to keep off the land. In short, my strength is exhausted.

"Postscript.—Four flag officers I understand are captured. Villeneuve is with me ; Vice-Admiral D'Alica is dead ; Rear-Admiral Cisneros, in the *Prince* ; Rear-Admiral Magon, I am

told, is amongst the captives, but I do not know where. Cantermine, commissaire of troops, is also in the *Prince*. Gravina and Dumanoir went off with 10 sail to Cadiz. Four Frenchmen went off to the southward. I will do the best I can."

Cornwallis felt the death of Nelson keenly. "The Admiral grieves much over the death of Lord Nelson," Captain Whitby wrote to his wife. "Never a word or thought of envy for his glorious victory, only a deep regret that they did not meet and speak in August last when they might have."

It will be remembered how as a sequel to the battle of Trafalgar Sir Richard Strachan, disconsolate at his failing to meet Allemand, fell in with and completely defeated the stragglers from Villeneuve's fleet under Dumanoir, who was attempting to get into Rochefort. "I hasten off the *Phoenix* to inform you of our victory over four unlucky French ships of the line which fell in our way," Strachan wrote to Cornwallis on November 3rd, and proceeded to describe the engagement, in which all four French ships were captured, the British only losing four men killed and twenty-three wounded. The letter goes on to say :

"They fired high, which accounts for our little loss, and as we were all mingled together at one time we picked up each other's shot. . . . Lord William Fitzroy has just come on board, and says the *Mont Blanc* has 63 killed and 96 wounded. They are all handsome ships, painted in stripes, well manned and extremely well managed." . . . He concludes by saying : "I will not take up more of your time, but beg to assure you that you have been the means of restoring me to life, for my heart was breaking. Good God, while I live I shall ever revere you with the most heartfelt gratitude."

There are two further letters from Strachan about this date, one dated November 23rd, written from Portsmouth after he had conducted his prizes safely home, and while his own ship, the *Cæsar*, was undergoing a refit. One passage in it is of interest ; it refers to a promotion recommended by him, and shows that after Trafalgar the feelings of the Admiralty were somewhat uncertain on this point. It reads :—

"I have a letter from Lord Garlies hinting that no promotion of any officer will take place till after the Cadiz arrangements are made. I am sorry for this ; the making the first lieutenant is a compliment to the ship's crew as well as the Captain, and it is

not near so grateful to their feelings by being delayed. I do not believe Lord Garlies is much in the secret of what the Board may intend to do, and it would be a vain endeavour to attempt to extract anything from Lord Barham or Admiral Gambier this cold weather ! ”

The second of the two letters is dated a few days later. By a process of deduction it gives an insight into Cornwallis's mind, and goes to show that, after Trafalgar, he considered that French activities at sea would cease, and that there would not be much more for the British Navy to do. It reads :—

“ I do not think with you that there will be nothing more to do. On the contrary, I think Bonaparte will be tempted to force his fleet out, or send them in detachments to annoy our trade or distant possessions. I have great hopes the Brest fleet may come out, that you may have the pleasure of giving an account of them ; and I think it likely they may endeavour to send it to the Mediterranean to form a junction with the Spanish and French at Toulon, where they are now too weak to effect anything, but, being joined by the Brest fleet or large detachment from it, may, if they get to that country, give us some trouble. The hope of this may induce the French to run some risk.

“ I dread the thought of our navy having nothing to do. Idleness will gain a greater victory over us than all our enemies combined ; and, if the fleet is once allowed to lay in port any time, we shall lose all that excellent order which is now so well established.

“ I hope always to be under your command, and that you never will leave us while the war continues. I am sure we shall have something to do ; it generally happens when least expected.”

CHAPTER XV

1805

FROM Whitby's letters to his wife about this time one is able to see how annoyed the Admiral was over the faction which, rightly or wrongly, he considered was working against him in political circles at home. That it was political he was convinced, and it could not well have been otherwise, as all he had done in the exercise of his great command had been to his credit. He seems to have allowed his irritation to fall upon the head of his Flag-Captain, who had for some months previous to this complained of his position on board the *Ville de Paris* as being little better than "a magistrate at the Old Bailey," as his only duty was to punish defaulters. "The Admiral is silent and irritable," he says in a letter to his wife; "the climax came when he accused me of being of the opposite party—I who, he well knows, have never been a party man; but his tempers soon melt away, and the sun shines again."

Cornwallis was evidently under the impression that Barham was working against him, as he wrote on October 31st:—

DEAR LORD BARHAM,—

If the intercourse with which I have been honoured formerly by your lordship could be forgotten, I should from recent events be induced to believe that I am in your way here, and that you would prefer some other arrangement. A statesman in your high post, unacquainted with the service, might, with the best intentions, have been led away. But when I consider your lordship's high character and long experience in different departments of the naval service, I could not for a moment have imagined that a flag officer, in great nominal command (at least), would have been permitted to continue, if it was not meant to afford him your countenance. I can assure your

lordship that I never had any particular partiality for this employment. The manner in which I was twice called to it by a great sea officer was all that was flattering to me ; it has been considered as the direct road to preferment by those in command as well as those of all the inferior ranks serving in the ship. The directing me to confine nearly the whole of the ships and vessels under my orders to the blockade, and supplying an admiral in port with cruisers to be sent upon what has always been considered belonging to this station, must, of course, lower my consequence ; and I should fear this and other restraints put upon me of late will frustrate my chief object—that of serving the country in the best manner I am able, which prompted my offer of service to any part of the world at the commencement of the war. The public service, my lord, should be the first consideration, and I do not really believe you have been accustomed to think emolument mine. If it had, I should have put myself in the way of it at a time of life when money might be considered of some value.

After Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, it became the considered policy of the Admiralty to continue the blockade of Brest up to a certain point, but to divide the remainder of the fleet into small independent squadrons acting principally for the protection of trade and under the direct orders of the Admiralty. This, of course, necessitated the reduction in the number of ships, especially cruisers, which had hitherto formed part of the Channel Fleet. Cornwallis appears to have resented it, and evidently took it as part of the intrigue to undermine his position as Commander-in-Chief, hence the letter, to which Barham replied :—

MY DEAR SIR,—

I can with truth declare to you that my confidence and regard for you is in no degree diminished ; but you must be aware of the difficulties I am under, from the habits that have been established and commands fixed before my return to the board ; and although many of them do, in no shape, meet with my approbation, yet it is out of my power to make a direct attack upon them. On the subject of port admirals having cruisers at their disposal beyond a few convoys and advice boats, I totally disapprove of it, and have begun to draw off the king's ships and to

put them under the cruising admirals, and shall continue it, if I live to finish the various regulations which I have in hand. These things require time and perseverance, but I am not without hopes that they may be accomplished. The station you are in is certainly the command of the profession in this country, but the circumstance of invasion has made such a change in the disposition of our ships that it became necessary to break it into several commands. From the present view of things, it will probably change again, but in what manner I cannot yet foresee. But the principle I lay down is, that as soon as we can command security at home and abroad from our line of battleships, the Atlantic should be covered with cruisers, and particularly from the Western squadron and Cork.

With regard to patronage, the service has become too extensive to make it any longer an object ; and I declare to you that since my coming to this board, I have made but one master and commander ; and when I read over the claims before me—from admirals and captains for their children, from the king's ministers, members of parliament, peers, and eminent divines—I do not see when I am to make another. Under these circumstances it is impossible that any person in my situation should give satisfaction. If I steer clear of injustice I shall think myself fortunate. To conclude, in all matters of patronage, I execute it as I would any other duty belonging to the office, I hope with impartiality. As to yourself, I can only repeat what I have said before, that you have my unreserved confidence and good wishes, and am very truly, My dear Sir, yours sincerely,

BARHAM.

Our success at Cadiz has been very great, abating the loss of poor Nelson. We have been very unlucky in not crossing upon this Rochefort squadron, and I have still hopes of Sir J. Strachan's finding them.

The last paragraph of Barham's letter tells of the anxiety he felt as to the whereabouts of the elusive *Allemand*. On November 13th he again wrote :—

“ I am still anxious about the Rocheford Squadron and am hurrying Sir Richard Strachan as much as possible that he may rejoin you.”

Strachan, as was shown in the preceding, did not rejoin Cornwallis until the end of the month. Barham wrote again on the 16th :—

“I must beg the favour of you to endeavour to procure as early information as possible whether or not the Rocheford Squadron is in Port or at Sea. I am in constant apprehension of receiving some injury from that Squadron.”

Three days later the same subject is harped upon, as Barham writes :—

“The enclosed extract is from a letter received yesterday from Consul Gambier of Lisbon, which if true will increase the Rochefort Squadron to 8 Sail of the line.

“The *Ramillies* will be ready to join you in a few days, and we expect the *St. George* in as short a time from Halifax.

“With this Help I flatter myself you will be able to send a proper Squadron to the Westward as soon as you have certain Information that the Rocheford or any other Ships are at Sea.

“It is a long time since we have heard anything certain concerning them, and the communication between you and the Board has by some means or other been very much interrupted of late owing, I conclude, to the persevering East winds.

“I need not say how much our movements here depend on frequent and circumstantial Information from the different Squadrons of the fleet, and which induces me to beg that you will direct those under your Command as well as the Cruizers to send as frequently as possible whatever may be picked up relative to the Enemies’ movements and Cruizers. It is at least six weeks since we have heard any thing certain concerning these Rocheford Ships, and so great is our uncertainty that we have it not in our power to form any plan for intercepting them. As this may happen again with other Squadrons, I must request of you who are to the Westward and have early Information, to act upon it, without waiting for orders from hence, with this only restriction, that you keep a sufficient force with you for the Blockade of Brest. . . . This is all that occurs to me at present except, as we get strong in numbers, I should prefer an open to a close blockade without the Channel.”

A week later Barham again writes :—

“I had wrote you a considerable long letter on the Subject of the Rocheford Squadron having been seen off Cape Finistre on the

3rd and which made me fearfull for the safety of the *Victory* and *Belleisle*, who are coming home single from Cadiz ; the remaining 6 will come together.

“What I proposed in consequence of that Information must be now postponed, as from the intelligence just received and which accompanies this, your attention will naturally be engaged in preventing or intercepting as far as you are able this Squadron of Bonaparte’s. The Ships under Sir R. Strachan are ordered to join you with every degree of Dispatch, and as soon as the Crippled Ships are arrived you may look for fresh Ships to enable you to recruit what you are short of, Provisions and Water.

“I heartily wish you success, and shall be very happy when it is in my power to give you Ships enough to keep a Squadron to the Westward of you and which I do not despair of in a short time.”

As a matter of fact, Allemand was never seen off Cape Finisterre on November 3rd. He was being entertained by the Spaniards at the Canary Islands about then, and engaged in selling the prizes he had captured off the Scillies the previous month. He did not leave those latitudes until November 19th, and did not reach the coast of Portugal until a month later. There he captured some British merchant vessels, and it was from them that he first heard of Nelson’s victory, and that a British squadron was on the look out for him. This decided him to endeavour to make a French port ; he realized that the game was up, and that the Bay of Biscay would be made too hot to hold him. Fortune still favoured him ; thick weather and a favourable wind helped him to get into Rochefort unseen on December 24th. Thus ended his adventurous cruise. Had Napoleon’s Admirals all shown the determined spirit which Allemand displayed, the British Navy’s formidable task would have been made much more difficult. Cornwallis’s irritation at being repeatedly badgered for news of a squadron that had completely disappeared off the face of the waters, but which he had made every endeavour to round up, is not to be wondered at.

In November of this year Cornwallis was appointed Admiral of the Red—a compliment rather than any increase in rank. He appreciated it. “I certainly consider the flag,” he wrote to Barham, “which you mention to have come down to me as an attention and civility. Some people value such things more

than others ; if I was a dozen years younger, I would rather be a senior Captain than have a flag of any kind."

It was about the end of November that the somewhat belated information came from a British secret agent that the Brest fleet intended to come out. Cornwallis was immediately apprised, but considered it of small importance. He had had some experience of the Brest fleet's half-hearted attempts, and felt that as they had failed to come out when Villeneuve was still undefeated, it was hardly likely they would do so now, and wrote to Barham saying :—

"I had the honour of receiving your lordship's letter of the 27th ultimo. I apprehend the intended expedition from Brest was planned before the defeat off Cadiz was known—the information is a month old, if not more. Your lordship may be assured that I shall take all possible care to watch that port. I should have thought if the ships at Brest were meant to be sent out, they could not have had any object more inducing than the intercepting our disabled ships, or the prizes ; many opportunities of wind and weather have offered.

"No information has been sent to me of the line of battle ships or any other having sailed from L'Orient. I have frigates upon that part of the coast."

To this Barham replied :—

"I have received yours of the 4th and that of Saturday from Torbay.

"I agree with you that the intended expedition must have been planned before the defeat of the Fleet, but I am very, very fearfull of their breaking their ships into small Squadrons, such as one or two line of Battle Ships and a frigate or two to accompany them for attacking our Frigate convoys. In this case it will be necessary that all your supernumerary ships should be employed in the same way to counteract them, and I would hope get possession of them. The ships I have most immediately in my eye are those from Rochefort, Ferrol and Vigo, and which if suffered to singe the sea in small numbers may do us an infinite mischief if not guarded against and which can only be done by Blockade or cruizers superior to them in number.

"We have never yet been able to fix the Rocheford Squadron, which might easily have intercepted our returning disabled ships if they had been so inclined. That hazard is now past, and we

shall refit them as fast as possible so as to enable you to detach in small numbers and in several squadrons. These Squadrons, besides looking into Ferrol and Vigo occasionally, must follow the enemy wherever they are heard of and be kept in the best sailing Trim as to provisions and stores. . . .

"The gentlemen you recommend are entered in my book, but this is a subject that gives no satisfaction to any one, and to me, who wish to do justice to all, it is a most tormenting one. To vacancies abroad I can sometimes appoint and serve individuals, but at home it is hopeless."

It had been decided by Barham to somewhat relax the blockade of Brest. The damage done to ships the past two winters had proved expensive. Napoleon having abandoned his scheme of invasion, and half the allied fleet having been destroyed, the menace from the possible activities of the fleet in Brest were proportionately reduced. When sending Cornwallis in December his general scheme for the new naval dispositions Barham wrote:—

"I enclose for your consideration an outline of my ideas concerning the Fleet you command, and I shall be glad if you will after consideration suggest anything that may occur to you to add or diminish.

"It is to little purpose for us to harass our officers and men, and wear out our ships in a fruitless Blockade during the winter."

Acting upon these instructions, Cornwallis withdrew the greater part of his squadron into Torbay. Part of the Brest fleet came out during his absence, only to be defeated the following year by Sir John Duckworth off San Domingo. Once more, and for the last time, he had been cruelly deprived of his long-sought-for engagement with the enemy, for his career was drawing to its close and no further opportunity was to be afforded him.

Cornwallis received many letters from Mrs. Whitby towards the end of this year, all to do with the general administration and enlarging of his property in Hampshire. She made many discreet purchases of land. "In the course of a fortnight," she wrote in one, "I hope to tell you that Mitchel's farm is yours; negotiations have been set on foot on an entirely satisfactory basis, and I believe will soon be concluded." No respectable middle-aged land agent could have written more business-like

letters, yet one occasionally comes across a little feminine touch which denotes the youth and sex of the writer, such as : " We have got a little calf, a boy, the son of the old black and white Norman. I forgot to tell you we were very near losing the latter not long since. She must never have another calf, or we certainly shall. The new comer is such a pretty little thing." In another letter she says : " How I hate these Easterly winds, my dear Admiral, which interfere in so disagreeable a manner with our correspondence." Proceeding to tell him how certain structural alterations to the house were proving difficult to carry out, she continues : " I hope you will soon come home, when two heads, you know, are better than one." The Admiral evidently made a confidant of her, and told her of his uncertainties as to what was taking place at home behind his back, for in the same letter she says : " Have you heard anything from Lord Barham in answer to yours ? I am afraid to do more than just ask the question in a letter. Perhaps he can say nothing, as he knows nothing. Can anything be more scandalous than political intrigue ? "

Mrs. Whitby's whole life was taken up at Newlands. She refused even to go to her sister-in-law, Lady Portman, at Bryanston, saying : " I cannot go to Bryanston while any planting is going on, which will be the case until the middle of winter, but then if they ask me I should not so much mind it, altho' I do not like going from home without John or you."

On another occasion this girl of twenty-two writes to the Admiral the steps she has taken to prevent a neighbour poaching on his estate : " I am both astonished and angry at Mr. Coney's conduct ; it is both strange and provoking. I have written requesting both him and his Bailiff, who is as bad, to desist. If this has not the desired effect further remonstrance must come from you, as you must either suffer it always or prevent it at once. Write to him direct ; do not enclose it to me. If he still persists in spite of everything I will get a warning drawn up by Richmond [a lawyer] and if necessary take the matter to a court of justice." After letting out some of her righteous indignation, and incidentally giving orders to the Admiral, she confesses a little of her loneliness, and says : " How long do you remain at Falmouth ? I wish I was with you—I do so long to see you and John again. If the ship was but at Portsmouth, how nicely we could manage

it." Her letters to Cornwallis are all in this strain, a mixture of business and affection. She seems to have made up her mind at all costs to have Newlands ready by the time the Admiral and her husband returned, and spared herself in no way to attain this object. She lived there alone with her child and one or two servants, went nowhere, and accepted no invitations.

In many of his letters to her Whitby implored her to take a change and go, either to Bath or to his sister, Lady Portman; but she was adamant—in one of her letters to him she says: "I cannot leave Newlands, the Admiral has set me a task and I mean to complete it; pray God by the time he and you return; at any rate he will see a great change, which I trust he will consider an improvement." This was written after she had received a letter from Cornwallis telling her that he had "complete confidence" both in her taste and in business matters. Perhaps one of her chief reasons for her declining a holiday was the principle that exists even to-day—that you cannot get the British workman out of a house unless you go and live in it yourself; as in one of her letters to the Admiral she said: "I shall be heartily glad to see the place clear of workmen, at present it swarms with one sort or another."

Vice-Admiral Nugent, who had been Captain of the Fleet to Cornwallis, gave up his appointment in November. In one of his letters to Barham, the Admiral said: "Vice-Admiral Nugent is tired of his situation, which I supposed he would be, and writes to resign, which I have not the smallest objection should take place." It had been assumed they had quarrelled—Whitby had rather hinted at it in a letter to his wife; but from a letter Cornwallis received from Mrs. Nugent in December, if they had, they must have made it up and parted friends.

The letter is of interest, as it shows how discontented many of Nelson's officers were at their treatment by the Admiralty after Trafalgar. "Nugent arrived 10 days ago," she wrote. "It gave me much pleasure to find that he entertain'd the same sentiment of respect and regard for you that he did when he joined the *Ville de Paris*; much hurt should I have been if it had been otherwise, as feeling myself sincere friendship for you I should have been disappointed if his opinions had varied from those we both used to hold. Captain Baker [the brilliant Captain of the *Phoenix* who had captured the *Didon* and prevented Allemand's

orders reaching him] is ill used by the Admiralty, and so are most of the officers that have belonged to the late brilliant successes; therefore the Discontent and cry against the Admiralty is not to be told, and I should conceive would turn them out, or force them to change their measures by encouraging gallantry instead of oppressing its votaries. John Bull (who is ever right) makes up to all these gentlemen for the neglect of the higher powers by revering them and treating them with popular marks of their approbation wherever they appear. I understand that Lord Barham and Admiral Gambier are the movers and execute all and everything at that Board. My surprise is great at Admiral Gambier having so much consideration; I used to know him well formerly and always considered him a very weak man."

Mrs. Nugent was not the only person who considered Admiral Gambier a weak man. He owed his position at the Admiralty to the fact that he was a kinsman of both Barham and Pitt. It is generally supposed that it was he who so strongly denounced the feasibility of the fire-ship proposal against the Brest fleet dealt with in Chapter VII of this phase. Judging by the meanness of the support he gave to Lord Cochrane when a similar but only partially successful attempt was made in 1809 against the French Fleet in the Basque Roads, the assumption is probably correct.

CHAPTER XVI

1806

IN January 1806 the unfortunate misunderstanding between Cornwallis and his Flag-Captain came to a head. Both had written to Mrs. Whitby each complaining of the other. The Admiral had got it into his head that Whitby was "on the popular side intriguing against" him, and was "always at logger-heads with Nugent"; Whitby, that the Admiral was "suspicious of even his best friends," and that, although he (Whitby) was only allowed to be a figure-head on board his own ship, he was consulted upon the most important matters, and that in consequence Nugent disliked him. Both were in the wrong. Whitby certainly was always loyal to his old Chief, but he should have accepted the position of any Flag-Captain and not grumbled; especially when he owed so much to his Admiral. Cornwallis was wrong in apparently consulting his Flag-Captain in preference to the Captain of the Fleet.

Mrs. Whitby's advice was sound. She wrote to the Admiral: "Your friendship with John has been built on too solid a foundation to quarrel with him about nothing. I do not mean to ask you to keep him in the *Ville de Paris*—I see you cannot agree in a ship, there are few intimate friends who can, for a great length of time; but you have never differed on any matters that were not professional, and on shore I am sure you would be as good friends as ever, and would be too, if he were in the fleet but not on the *Ville de Paris*." She goes on to suggest that he should take the youngest Captain in the Fleet whom he knew personally and liked, make him Flag-Captain and give Whitby the ship. Her letter proceeds to give him a detailed account of the latest improvements at Newlands, and concludes by saying she would like to know what is decided upon, as she could not possibly remain at Newlands if friction between the two continued.

Captain Gosselin was willing to serve as Flag-Captain, and an exchange was effected through the Admiralty. Thanks to the sagacity of his young wife, Whitby and the Admiral made up their differences and once more became good friends. Both were delighted with the solution.

In a letter to Mrs. Whitby, Cornwallis wrote : " My dear Theresa, yours is a wise head on young shoulders."

Whitby wrote : " My darling Wife, it takes a clever woman to solve a difficulty and you have done so."

To the Admiral, Mrs. Whitby wrote in answer : " Thank you for your truly kind letter, my dear Admiral. Your affectionate expressions and kind thanks quite distress me. I have done nothing for you at Newlands that deserve them, and if my endeavours to please have succeeded, I am amply repaid for any little trouble and anxiety I may have had by the fact that you and John are once more friends. I will not leave Newlands if I can help it, but consider how could John's wife have continued living in your house if you had parted with him in anger, so please do not quarrel again."

Matters at sea were in a state of stagnation. The French Fleet, or what remained of it, was still in Brest, and showed no disposition to come out. Cornwallis, as he had been directed, considerably relaxed the blockade, and most of the winter his Fleet were in Torbay, or cruising between that anchorage and Ushant.

Pitt's death on January 23, 1806, necessitated a complete reconstruction of the Ministry. It also enabled St. Vincent once more to come to the front, an opportunity which his supporters were not slow to take advantage of ; nor was he unwilling to serve now that the man whom he considered had slandered and insulted him was dead. Cornwallis received an interesting letter from Mrs. Nugent giving an account of Pitt's last hours and shedding some light on the turmoil and confusion which his death had caused :—

" I suppose you know," she wrote on the day his death was announced, " the present history of this town ; most extraordinary it is. Before I close this letter I shall have to add the death of Mr. Pitt. He has been manly and resigned in his illness. Yesterday morning he asked his physicians how long they thought he had to live ? and being told that it was uncertain, and recovery

out of the question, he received the sacrament and prayed very fervently with the Bishop of Lincoln ; then doing the necessary business previous to this last journey. I feel glad that he should have paid necessary attention to religion, for, as a man of his superior talents is supposed to investigate all subjects, so these last acts will affect the minds of the public and give good impressions. The eyes of all sides are fixed on Charles Fox, and I hear no other person named in the slightest degree.

“The present Admiralty, I hear, are making their arrangements of ‘*congé*’ ; and Lord St. Vincent, who is in perfect health I conceive will return to that Board as first Lord of the Admiralty. In no case do I believe they would have remained in, for the cry is violent among the navy against them, and they really have treated Baker, Sir Richard Strachan and others like delinquents ; Lord Barham, as I hear, holding the language ‘that it was his duty to make people do theirs, because it was their duty.’ This sounds very fine, magnificent, and, let us add, nonsensical ; for if it was possible that mortals should or could be taught to be so virtuous as to look to no rewards, and if such duties were to be taught, eighty-three was too advanced an age to enforce new maxims, and that is Lord Barham’s age.

“I begun by telling you that before I closed my letter I should inform you of Mr. Pitt’s death. I had a note this minute to say that this event took place at Putney, at half an hour after four o’clock this morning. He was in perfect possession of his senses, and shewed the same strong mind to the last. The confusion of the town, the consternation at the present situation of affairs, is not to be told. I conceive Mr. Fox and the present Opposition must come in. Mr. Addington’s state of health puts his return to office out of the question. The Opposition differ highly among themselves. The Grenvilles are for the continuation of the war ; Mr. Fox for peace. I trust some rising men will rise up to inspire us with hope. At present, Mr. Fox alone seems to arrest the public voice, and I understand his health is bad likewise, and that he shews no inclination to return to office.”

It will be remembered that after Pitt’s death a Coalition Government was formed in which the Right Hon. Charles Grey was appointed First Lord and not St. Vincent as Mrs. Nugent suggested. Cornwallis must have appreciated for some time that a change in the Ministry was almost certain to cause a change

in the command of the Channel Fleet ; he realized only too well that a man's military genius was of no avail against political intrigue. A letter from St. Vincent soon made the position clear ; it was written on February 5th and reads :—

“ Secret and confidential.—Some months after Mr. Pitt came into office the last time, a request was made to me by his Cabinet, through Lord Sidmouth, to take the command of the fleet, which I spurned at, unless Mr. Pitt unsaid all he had said in the House of Commons against me ; and, lest any unfavourable impression should have been made upon the mind of the King on this refusal, I asked an audience at Windsor, and humbly submitted that, although my life was at the disposal of his Majesty and of my country, I was the guardian of my own honour, and could not trust it in the hands of Mr. Pitt, after the treatment I had received from him. I am now called upon to serve, and, in the state the Empire is reduced to, I feel it an imperious duty to obey the call, with only one repugnance, which arises out of the high respect and esteem I have for you ; and I beg you will rest assured that every possible delicacy and attention will be paid to your zealous services, for no man regards you more sincerely than I.”

Cornwallis evidently believed that he had no cause of complaint against St. Vincent personally ; a further letter from the latter dated five days later suggests this :—

“ Private and confidential.—Your obliging letter has set my heart quite at ease. Mr. Grey lamented that he could not, with propriety, write to you until the patent was read at the Board and he had taken his seat, which, I hope, he will do to-day ; but it may be a month or six weeks before I receive any appointment, and what it is to be I know not.

“ Every possible accommodation will be given to you, and the most favourable and honourable statement of your meritorious services made to his Majesty.”

“ *What it is to be I know not.*” This phrase may have caused some doubt in Cornwallis's mind as to whether after all he was to be superseded or not ; if it did, he was soon to be disillusioned, as two days later Grey wrote himself :—

“ I understand from Lord St. Vincent that he has already communicated to you the wish of his Majesty's present ministers to avail themselves of his services, which his health will now allow him to resume. This intention I had the honour of sub-

mitting to his Majesty this morning, when it received his approbation, and Lord St. Vincent, with the union at the main, will be appointed to the command of the Channel Fleet.

“In making this communication I must beg you not to consider it as proceeding from any opinion that your services have not been highly honourable to yourself, and eminently advantageous to the country; an acknowledgment which I shall be most happy to confirm by every attention in my power to your convenience as to the time and manner of quitting your command.

“Orders will be given, in compliance with the wish expressed in your letter to Lord St. Vincent, for the *Ville de Paris* to come to Spithead, and you will receive, with as little delay as possible, instructions from the Board as to the manner in which you are to proceed in leaving the fleet under Sir Charles Cotton.”

The same post brought the Admiral a letter from Lord Hood:—

“Before this can reach your hands, you will have heard of the very wonderful changes that have taken place in His Majesty’s Government—God grant it may be for the best & that we shall be preserved from the fangs of the Corsican Monster.

“It is reported that a total sweep is to be made at the Admiralty & Navy Boards & that Captain Nicholls is to succeed. Sir A. Hamond & Grey, the Deputy Comptroller Markham & Sir Cha^s Pole, go to the Admiralty & Sir H. Neale if he choses it. As the Premier told me he had made him the offer, but being at sea had not received his answer, he went in hopes of Sir S. Hood [Samuel Hood, Lord Hood’s nephew] would have accepted to which I replied, that he had often declared to me he would never take a civil office but stick to his own element. I thought he was perfectly right. Lord S^t Vincent it is said is to be *Lord High Admiral* at Sea, & to command from Cape Finistere to Johny Grotts House in Scotland. How Lord Keith will like this I will not pretend to say, probably you know for certain, what I only do from report, which is often erroneous.”

The Opposition in the House of Commons were dissatisfied, and in a speech condemning the action of the new Ministry in dismissing Cornwallis, Canning said:—

“Why is the command to be taken from Admiral Cornwallis, who has proved himself so worthy of it? Do the new ministers mean to begin by dismissing officers of great experienced talents?

The services of Admiral Cornwallis will, we trust, be remunerated by a Peerage."

Cornwallis, as will have been appreciated, disliked politicians intensely. His letter in answer to Grey's must have been in quite a different strain from that which he wrote St. Vincent (although neither is unfortunately available), as on February 27th Grey wrote again :—

"I have been favoured with your letter of the 21st, but delayed answering it till I heard of your arrival at Spithead. I am very sorry that you should have found either in the conduct of the late Board or in the appointment of Lord St. Vincent to the command of the Channel fleet any cause of complaint. I can only say that I intended fully to acknowledge the merit of your past services, and, in carrying into effect an arrangement which it appeared to His Majesty's Ministers expedient to adopt, to shew you every personal attention in my power.

"As an additional proof of the sincerity of this disposition, I shall be very happy to promote whichever of your Lieutenants you may think most deserving to the rank of Master and Commander, and to recommend the other two whom you mention for promotion to Admiralty vacancies abroad. For this purpose I must trouble you to send me their names.

"Orders will be sent down to-night from the Board for you to strike your flag, as I understand it to be your own wish, under all the present circumstances, for this should be done with as little delay as possible."

Whether Grey insinuated when he wrote, "I can only say I intended fully to acknowledge the merit of your past services," etc., etc.—that he had meant to recommend Cornwallis for a peerage, but that the tone of the Admiral's letter made it impossible—one cannot say ; but it is quite possible : at any rate, it is extremely improbable that he would have accepted what he considered to be a doubtful honour. Cornwallis struck his flag for the last time on February 22nd at Torbay, and went immediately to Newlands. There is small doubt that he was at this period of his life a disappointed man. In a letter to his wife, written late in February, Whitby, who was at sea at the time, said :—

"It isn't given to every great sailor to win a victory at sea any more than it is to every Military commander to win one on shore ; there are other equally important achievements to be

attained, and no one can deny the Admiral his share of having attained them."

This, then, was the kernel of his dissatisfaction: he knew his career at sea was finished, and the one great object of his life, to obtain a great naval victory, had not been granted to him.

"I have heard so much these few days past," his niece Elizabeth wrote on March 26th, "about the Admiral is displeased, the Admiral is sulky, retires, etc." She had written to urge him to come to London to consult with Hood, who "desired me to say most strongly that you ought to come." But whatever it was they wished him to do—possibly to put forward his claims to employment at the Admiralty—Cornwallis remained where he was. Apart from the fact that service on shore did not appeal to him, he was sick at heart. His brother, Marquis Cornwallis, had died suddenly in India, and now the man, whom he had always looked upon as a son, had been brought to Newlands worn out and desperately ill. Whitby died on April 6th in the prime of his life.

CHAPTER XVII

1806-1819

At the date of his death, Whitby's little girl was a little more than a year old; his widow, an attractive woman of twenty-three, almost forty years younger than Cornwallis, who was in his sixty-third year. After her husband's funeral at Milford, the parish in which Newlands is situated, Mrs. Whitby retired to live with her sister at Wallington, near Fareham. The Admiral commenced a year of solitude, his only companions being his parrots and horses, of which he was exceeding fond. A letter he received from Mrs. Nugent, which gives one an impression of the feeling created in a well-educated person's mind over the impeachment of Lord Melville, as well as other topical matters, is of interest. It is dated May 4th, and reads:—

“All the town are engaged with Lord Melville's trial. I have attended every day, and I think it proceeds much better for him than the 10th Report gave me room to hope. The Lords have rejected much evidence, such as the private accounts kept by Mr. Douglass his paymaster, and found in the possession of his widow. But, nevertheless, it is an ugly business, and I think they have established that he has employed sums of money to his own use, and that he went upon a system in large payments of taking sums, such as one thousand, two thousand, &c. The ten thousand pounds, that is one of the ten thousand, they first proved deficient in one large payment. Then they bring various bankers' books and prove his settling with one, paying what he has overdrawn at another's, putting money in the hands of a third, and these sums agree precisely with the calculation of the sum taken or supposed to be taken, the date of the deficiency and date of the bankers' books corresponding; and I certainly doubt the possibility of any defence overthrowing the above facts. Nevertheless, I doubt the Lords acting upon these grounds,

which is circumstantial evidence and not positive evidence. But if they do or not, he will never recover the disgrace of such circumstantial evidence. Lord Melville's conduct is highly dignified ; no man's in such a predicament can be more so. He is steady and respectful to the House, actively employed with his counsel, and betraying no marks of anger or want of patience to the most severe language. His own devilish letter to the Commissioners, and his own speech at the Bar of the House of Commons ring the changes upon it in all shapes, and would that he had done neither. His situation puts me in mind of Cardinal Wolsey. He is undone by his ambition, for had he on his first examination been civil to the Commissioners instead of treating them loftily, they would not have meddled with him, as I understand that he being first Lord of the Admiralty, with greater power than ever any individual possessed in this country, they did not want to have to do with him. I conceive that the prosecution will last 8 or 10 days more, and his defence as long, so the trial will last altogether one month. His expenses are £400 per day. He may be found guilty ; certainly I fear not blameless ; but when one recollects that he stands in his present situation from envy and party motives it freezes one's blood. I am told that Mr. Fox countenances this prosecution as little as he can, and he attends seldom. By the way, he looks to me as if he was dying ; very ill indeed.

"I heard it reported that you offered to serve under Lord St. Vincent. I think everything that is handsome and public spirited is like you ; but do not be angry with me if I say that I am very glad you do not serve with him, because I think him selfish and dangerous except where he is paramount, and your character as a professional man would annoy him. I am rejoiced that Mrs Whitby is better. Time alone cures our misfortunes, but the greatness of misfortunes generally cure themselves by removing all hope except as to the future."

It is not possible to trace anything in either the Admiralty records, or in the Admiral's papers, to show that he ever offered to serve under St. Vincent, nor can anything be found to justify Hood's assertion when he wrote in April the following year :—

"Being informed yesterday that an invitation was given you to resume the command of the Channel Fleet, I therefore hope and trust you will accept it from a conviction I have that the

defence of the nation upon the water cannot be placed in more able hands."

Cornwallis received many letters from Flag officers and Captains in the Channel Fleet regretting his retirement. As was natural, he had many protégés still serving in the Navy; although no longer himself on the active list, he was, owing to his honourable career, able to foster their interests in the service. Thomas Grenville had succeeded Grey at the Admiralty in November, and, in answer to a letter from the Admiral with reference to some young officers, wrote a very civil letter in reply:—

"I yesterday received the honour of your letter, which I do not delay to acknowledge. Most undoubtedly I cannot but feel that the eminent situation which you have so honourably filled in the Navy, and the distinguished services which you have performed, must claim from the Naval Department all possible testimonies of consideration & attention, and I should be sorry indeed to be found wanting in either to an officer of such high & well-deserved estimation. I will accordingly take immediate note of the names."

The old Admiral was beginning to feel lonely. He had kept up a constant correspondence with the wife of his old friend, but not until she had been a widow for a year did he ask her to come to Newlands. "I have nothing to look forward to except a lonely old age," he wrote her. "John is gone, and now you and your little dear have left me. If you feel it advisable, will not Juliana [Mrs. Whitby's sister] come with you; you know I should be always happy to have anyone you may choose to bring with you." The following month Mrs. Whitby, with her little girl and her sister, took up their abode under the Admiral's roof. A few months later this arrangement was upset, as Juliana became engaged to, and married, Mr. Nicholas Tindal, a rising young barrister, who afterwards became Lord Chief Justice of England. Again Mrs. Whitby left Newlands; but she too, except for her little daughter, was practically alone in the world. All her sisters were married and her parents dead. Cornwallis wrote her:—

"God knows best, my dear Theresa, what arrangements you will make. I will only say (what I trust is wholly unnecessary) that at all times I shall be happy to see you here. Can you not bring yourself to solace the remaining years of an old man, who has ever looked on you as his daughter, and who has flattered

himself that his affection and regard were in some measure returned ? ”

This pathetic appeal decided her to return permanently. It was true, as all her letters show, that she looked upon him as a second father, her own having died in her childhood : she was forty years younger than he was, and if people talked, which she fully realized might be the case, well, let them ! Probably nowadays she would have married him, but in 1806 people thought otherwise, and such a difference in age was an unsurmountable barrier. On the other hand, neither may have ever contemplated marriage ; they were just like father and daughter ; certainly, as has already been mentioned—there is nothing in any of their letters to each other which would suggest anything different.

Cornwallis's relations were pleased, especially his brother, the Bishop, who never wrote without sending his love “ to Theresa and the little one.” It was only after the Admiral's death, twelve years later, and when he had made Mrs. Whitby his sole heiress, that any of his family turned against her and became spiteful ; but to his dying day the Bishop remained her friend. Her own relations were the most unkind, and became at once hostile. Charles, Second Marquis Cornwallis, wrote to his uncle in August of this year : “ I cannot understand the cruel sentiments which Capt. Whitby's family express towards his widow ; I find them most unnatural and uncalled for.”

The remaining twelve years of the Admiral's life were entirely spent in the peaceful pursuits of the country. He corresponded at intervals with his old friends. Some of their letters to him are of interest ; all are affectionate. Hood, now getting a very old man, was a frequent correspondent. In September, 1808, he was at Bath, and wrote from there :—

“ You must think me exceeding rude and ungratefull in not sooner giving you my thanks for the kind and affectionate letter you did me the honor to write me. But the true reason is I feel the effects of old age, and have been troubled with Rumatic or Goutie complaints and so severe in my right wrist, which reached the upper joint of my thumb, that for some time I had difficulty in guiding my pen.

“ I have also other complaints which induced me to have recourse to the waters of this place, which have often been of Service to me, but there is no cure, my dear Admiral, for old age.

It may, however, more or less be made comfortable and free from sufferings. Accept my most sincere regards, and I beg you will present them to Mrs Whitby."

Hood visited Newlands the following year. Writing to the Admiral to announce his arrival, he said :—

"I think I am now enabled, My dear Admiral, to point out the time nearly which will conduce so much to my own gratification and delight, as my long wished for visit at Newlands.

"It is my present intention to set out for your Mansion on Monday the 7th, but as I travel with my own horses piano piano, it will most likely be the Friday or Saturday following, namely the 11th or 12th of Jan^y before I reach you, for in the state in which the roads at present are, I cannot reckon upon more than an advance of twenty miles p^r day. Should this plan not clash with any engagements you may have formed in contradiction to it, I beg you will have the goodness to secure for me at the Inn a lock-up place for my carriage, Stalls for three horses, and accommodation for the Coachman and Groom.

"P.S.—I shall send by the Waggon, under your address, an Hamper of Soda Water ; let me know where I am to direct it to be lodged at Lymington, until it gets (perhaps in your cart) to Newlands."

Most of the information as to the closing years of Cornwallis's life is taken from the short memoir written by Mrs. West [Mrs. Whitby's daughter] and referred to in the author's preface. The following are a few extracts from this :—

"He was strict churchman and disliked nonconformists and their creeds. When he was approached to sell a bit of his land for the purpose of building a chapel, he flew into a violent rage, and said he'd sooner give it to the church than sell it to the Devil. This he promptly did, and the land in question now forms part of the Glebe of the Parish."

"Having had so much salt beef during his service at sea, he would never touch it, salt or otherwise, but preferred mutton. a cold joint of which was always on the side-board at every meal."

"Just in all his dealings with his fellow-men, he was largely beneficent to the poor. He set up the second day school for the young villagers ever known in England. It was held in a cottage within the grounds." Proceeding to mention by name the large

circle of the Admiral's neighbours, Mrs. West says : " He maintained a handsome establishment and had large dinner-parties frequently." . . .

" He rose at four o'clock and rode out on his favourite pony from six to eight in all weathers and seasons. Then to breakfast. The meal was very simple. One half cup of strong green tea and innocent of milk and sugar, a thick piece of bread, which he himself toasted and ate without butter. A plain lunch at one, and dinner at six, and always drank his bottle of port. Strong coffee, a game of bagatelle, and so to bed."

Regarding the Admiral's love of animals, Mrs. West wrote : " He loved animals. The squirrels, rabbits, pigeons and all wild birds were always under his window : they all seemed to know him and became quite tame. He disliked fox-hunting and coursing and all sport in which the animal died by slow torture."

Referring to Cornwallis's dislike of unmerited honours, she wrote : " I was once poring over a Peerage when the Admiral asked me what I was doing. Studying heraldry, I replied. ' Put that nonsense away,' he quickly said. ' Don't you realize that half the men in that book are living on the reflected glory of their forebears ? Why learn about them ? Learn to employ your time more profitably. Honours are very well in their way, but remember this, "Worth makes the man and want of it the fellow."'"

As the years went on the Admiral grew more and more dependent on Mrs. Whitby and hated her going away : whenever she did so he wrote to her very frequently, almost entirely on matters connected with the property ; in nearly every letter he says, after detailing an interview with some tenant : " I said I would leave it to you to determine." In others, " You seem to have been away for so long a time, then I look at the Almanack and find it only 3 days ! " In one of his letters, dated June 1811, he described a curious experience which happened to his old brother-officer Nugent, who had gone to visit some friends in Richmond. " He [Nugent] went into a room, where he found the Prince playing with the Anglesea children, who seizing a toy sword bade Nugent kneel, and there and then performed the accolade upon him before the assembled company. Now it appears that neither Kings or Princes Regent can joke about this ancient ceremony, and the question is whether Nugent is or is not

Sir Charles ; he declares he has no wish to be." From inquiries made at the College of Heralds it does not appear, however, that Nugent ever was knighted.

One of Cornwallis's best correspondents towards the close of his life was his brother the Bishop ; his letters were often amusing and generally topical. " I saw Lord Melville the other day," he wrote in 1810 ; " he looks older, and I thought like all unplaced statesmen, feeling the want of former confidence " ; and goes on to say :—

" I have had two chaplains of men-of-war turn out most exemplarily. The King says a red coat never takes a good black dye. I never heard his opinion of blue coats, but I have a lieutenant of the Navy preferred in my diocese who conducts himself well.

" I hope you have got a good stock of port wine, as I am not very sanguine as to the deliverance of Portugal. I have never before heard of great, decisive victories attended with rapid retrograde motions. Alexander and Cæsar did not conquer in this way."

An entertaining letter of his is dated April 1811. The last portion might have been written in 1927, so like is it to some recent happenings :—

" I am glad to hear you ride so often. You farm, if not profitable in other respects, must be greatly so to your health. . . .

" Lord Bacon, I think, recommends a house as well as an establishment to be rather below what the income might seem to bear. If this was so in his days, what would he have said in our days ? We are to have, it is thought, a loan of 20 millions, besides war taxes, property taxes and others. However, here in London there is no appearance of want, more luxury and prodigality than ever, but not a guinea and scarcely a shilling to be seen. This is said to be of no consequence ; I wish it may prove so. In the trading part of the country, there is distress to a great degree. On Saturday we had guns firing, bells ringing, and flags displayed on most of the churches on account of our success in Portugal, which does not appear to be as yet decisive as to the French army. . . .

" The last post brought me an account of the failure of a ship-builder and owner of collieries to the amount of £300,000 in the north. I shall probably lose £200 or £300 only by his

failure. Some of our Durham friends, and particularly the Bishop, had a high opinion of him. But I never had any dependence upon him. Besides a certain loss, I am afraid that we shall be involved in law difficulties. The man was originally a ship carpenter, and worked his way up to magnificence and final ruin, though bankrupts contrive now to be upon their legs again very soon. From being a working ship's carpenter he became possessed of a great castle—not a place formerly a castle like this, but an existing one—and lived most extravagantly. He gave one entertainment which cost, it is said, some thousands. I am surprised that persons should continue to be taken in by such adventurers.”

He wrote again from Worthing later in the year :—

“ This place is now almost entirely deserted. The gay folks are gone to Brighton till March, as it is extremely vulgar to be in London in a settled way before March.

“ Your old friend Admiral Nugent is here, or was so a day or two ago. I saw him driving his daughter in a donkey carriage, much in fashion here. However, the animal was not very toward, and he did not steer very well—as often on the pavement as in the road.

“ I am beginning Fox ; but I am sure I shall not altogether agree with Mr. Trotter [Fox's secretary and biographer]. Upon the whole, I esteemed Mr. Fox more than Mr. Pitt, excepting vices, which did not exist in the latter part of life ; but I did not greatly esteem either ; and if they had not been orators, I have known many wiser, abler, and much better men than either.

“ I saw a letter from Portugal giving not a very favourable account of the health of our army. Agues and bilious disorders are very prevalent among some parts of it. Others are keeping hounds and very jolly. I suppose they occupy so large a country that there is a variety of climate experienced by them, some of it very unhealthy, other parts quite otherwise.”

Proceeding to bemoan the loss of a wallet, the Bishop concludes :—

“ They used to say that the army took away all the robbers in time of war. It does not appear to be so now, so one advantage of war is gone.”

Although most of his contemporaries had, Cornwallis never sat for his portrait as an Admiral. Lord Gardner [Allan Hyde,

second Lord Gardner; he was a midshipman on his father's ship at the Battle of the Saints in 1782], who had a great admiration for him, evidently wished to make up this deficiency, for he wrote in 1812:—

MY DEAR ADMIRAL,—

Having placed in my Library, the Bust of your revered Brother Lord Cornwallis, with those of Mr. Pitt, Lords Wellesley, St. Vincent and Mr. Conway—I solicit the favor, a favor (which you would also confer on the Profession and your Countrymen at large) to allow Baron or Nolleken to make a Model of yourself which I shall be proud to place with these great Men.

I hope you will forgive the liberty I am taking with you, but as I have known you from my infancy—I was your *Shipmate* in 1782 at Jamaica. I have served under you with the greatest respect to your Talents and Valour as well as comfort to myself.

I hope you will forgive what comes from my heart.

The author has been unable to discover whether Cornwallis agreed to the suggestion or not.

In May 1814 Cornwallis was made a Vice-Admiral of England. The announcement was conveyed to him in a letter from Lord Melville, the First Lord [not to be confused with the Lord Melville of 1804]:—

“I have the pleasure to acquaint you that directions have been given, in obedience to The Prince Regent's commands, for preparing a Commission appointing you to the situation of Vice-Admiral of England in the room of Lord Bridport, deceased.”

Any compliment from his own profession always pleased the Admiral. Writing to Mrs. Whitby, who happened to be away, he said: “A civil letter from Melville, acquainting me of my appointment as Vice-Adm^{al} of England, pleases me; if he had mentioned Charles' [Charles Warde, the Admiral's nephew] promotion at the same time I should have been still further pleased.”

Lieutenant Warde, who was at Portsmouth, the following month wrote an account of the Naval Review there:—

“I will after the review, if I can, pay you another short visit. The Prince arrives to-morrow and it is said stays till Friday, and the streets are so full of people it is difficult to get along. The Fleet are moved in two lines, the ships of the line forming the

inner one, and Frigates and Brigs the outer, by which arrangement, I am sorry to say, I am placed so far to the N.W. as to be out of sight from Portsmouth."

The Admiral used every year to go on a driving tour with Mrs. Whitby and her little girl. In 1814 he went to Norfolk and wrote to the Bishop giving him an account of what he had seen. The latter replied :—

"I went Part of the Tour of Norfolk in 1759 with my Father, but we hastened to Brome on hearing of the Battle of Minden, My Brother being there with L^d Granby in Germany.

"On that House and Place I have heard that £80,000 has been spent. However, all that Matter is settled, and there is no use in recuring to it.

"Ld. Stafford has made a flower Garden at Trentham, and the Custom is obtaining every Where. It is a great while since the Water was altered at Blenheim. I remember it in its old state; and when Brown altered it, he said the Thames would never forgive him. The water at Blenheim was his Chef d'ouvre.

"You talk of 560 miles as a great Many to travel in one year. My Servant told me last Year, when I settled his posting Book, that I had travelled more than 1000 in the Summer. But this was altogether an act of necessity, for I dislike travelling very much.

"You have an advantage, which I have not, in such a Companion as Mrs. Whitby, who seems to have very good sense as well as pleasing Manners: and I know what a pleasure young one's administer at Theresa's age. [Miss Whitby was also named Theresa.] I hope she will always continue a comfort and satisfaction to her Mother."

The last letter from the Bishop to his brother was written in November 1818, just after his return from Brighton. He was seventy-nine at the time, but still retained his sense of humour :—

"It was delightful; but I went three years ago from Worthing to see it, and found it so altered, that if I had not known that I was at Brighton again, I should not from appearances have discovered it. I wanted to see the Prince's Palace; but upon my getting near it, I was accosted by a decent-looking man, 'So you are come here to get a better Bishopric.' This did not look auspicious, and I sounded a retreat; and went to poor Metcalfe's, who is just dead; I should rather have said, rich Metcalfe's, for

he got by his vinegar concern a great fortune without any trouble and hardly any inspection.

“The Queen is now, I believe, worse than ever ; but she has so outlived calculation, and (horrid to say) I believe bets, that her death must not be reckoned upon.”

A letter from Sir Richard Strachan, written in March 1811, who was at the time high up in his profession, is of interest as it explains why he refused to go to South Africa the preceding year :—

“I forget whether I ever told you my reason for declining to go to the Cape, which I am since sorry for, as I have been much neglected in the Common forms of attention, which one had a right to expect. I had heard that the Isles of France must be taken before I could arrive there ; I therefore Consider’d the *offer* of conducting the Enterprize against these Islands merely Complimentary, as the expedition would arrive there about the time I should leave England, and having no desire to be a port admiral, I made my excuses to M^r Yorke, who has since told me he did not know of the Indian armament being in such a State of forwardness, and that it was as well I did not go. Nothing has been offer’d me since, but it may be owing to my having observed to M^r Yorke that I would rather be Second in a Fleet or Squadron where there might be a probability of an action with the Enemy than Chief where no such prospect offer’d.”

In a letter to Mrs. Whitby, of August 1813, Cornwallis quotes at length from a letter which his niece, Charlotte Warde, had received from Spain and sent him to read. It gives an account of the Battle of Vittoria :—

“There was a private Letter in Charlotte’s which came on Saturday from an officer of rank. I would have sent it to you, but she requested me to return it. It is just such a one as might be expected from an English officer having nothing to do with politics. It is full as flattering to an Englishman as the Marshall’s—mentions officers and corps which were distinguished, but no Portuguese. It was written immediately after the battle, with a p.s. dated the 24th. I suppose the private letters were not suffer’d to be given out for a Long while, if they were allow’d to be brought over at first. This officer says the French were driven from four positions. He says They defended Themselves most bravely & that *Joseph* [King of Spain] was conspicuous

mounted upon a white Horse in the hottest of the fire ! He had enough to do to escape with the clothes He had on : *every thing* was taken. The pursuit continued until dark, when the plunder commenced. He says there were at least two thousand carriages of all nations ; several capital English Barouches were torn to atoms by the men—trunks broken open by a single blow of the flintlock. It rain'd incessantly all night and next day, which must have been dreadful to the poor wounded on both sides. He mentions a shocking occurrence which came within His own observation : ‘ Two poor French officers, severely wounded, had crawled together and had been found at dusk by some men who were collecting wounded. They had remain’d (as indeed Thousands had of necessity done) since the day before without food or Their wounds dressed, exposed in that state to the inclemency of the weather. It was too late to have them convey’d in Last night, and this morning they were found having stabbed each other with knives, thus putting an end to a miserable existence the agonies of which they were unable to bear.’

“ He mentions also a circumstance to shew the distress our army was in for want of money & credit. At Valladolid a commissary purchased several Loads of Barley for the cavalry. He had no money to pay for it ; the Spaniard would not Let it go without ; the price was two dollars a measure of about a Basket. One of the *Harpies*, called Contractors, who follow the Army, was found who paid for it, received bill on Lisbon at the rate of eight dollars for what He had only paid two. The fact, on the truth of which you may rely, speaks for itself. It proves at once the state of our poverty and our miseries. How long can an army of 150,000 be fed at this rate ? And it might be ask’d, if Bonaparte had not acted like a mad Fool, when would it have ended ? and what would have been the consequences ? . . . ”

At the conclusion of the general peace in 1815 Cornwallis was created a K.C.B. He was never enrolled in the order, probably on account of his health, which precluded his leaving Newlands after the summer of 1816. But this is conjecture.

Little more remains to tell of Admiral Cornwallis. After his fifty years’ service at sea, with all its varied adventure in many countries, his life in retirement seems comparatively tame and uneventful. The reader may inquire : Where are all the many letters he must have received from his brother-officers still

serving, giving accounts and impressions of what was happening in the Navy? Doubtless there were many, but unfortunately they are not available, and were probably among the numerous documents he destroyed before his death. But as Mrs. West says in her memoir: "He thoroughly enjoyed life in a quiet way, was hospitable to rich and poor alike—a man who was loved and respected by all with whom he came in contact."

In 1816, when returning from one of his driving tours, he had a stroke at Salisbury. From this he partially recovered, but was never the same man again. Three years later he contracted a chill. To continue Mrs. West's account: "He sat for three days in an armchair in the library, mostly sleeping, and watched with the tenderest care by my mother and myself. On the afternoon of July 5th, after a vain effort to try to get him to take his medicine, they thought to accomplish it through me. Holding the glass, I besought him to drink. He replied, 'Don't torment me!' then, opening his eyes, he saw who it was; he took my hands (I was only thirteen at the time), and said: 'My dear! my dear! God bless you always.' He never spoke again, and passed away with my hand still in his."

In his will Cornwallis left his entire fortune (with the exception of some legacies) to Mrs. Whitby in trust for her daughter and her daughter's son, who was the author's father. He gave directions as to his funeral that he was to be "buried alongside his friend Captain John Whitby in Milford Churchyard," also that no tomb-stone or any kind of memorial was to be erected to his memory. This last injunction Mrs. Whitby obeyed to the letter. Her daughter, however, ignored it, for she not only built a family vault, to which she caused the coffins of her parents and the Admiral to be transferred, but also put up a large memorial tablet in the church itself, pleasing in design, but setting out in the best early Victorian manner the family history, qualities, and achievements of the latter, the very thing he desired least. Poor gallant, capable old Admiral! Let us hope he did not turn in his grave.

INDEX

INDEX

- Abercromby, General, 197, 291, 301,
 306, 311
 Addington, 282
 American citizen, 354
 Amherst, 19
 Amiens, Peace of, 373, 388
 Andaman Islands, 236, 245
Astrea, 313
 Austria, 199
- Baker, Captain, 500
 Bangalore, 203
 Barham, Lord, 473, 479, 488, 498
 Barrington, Admiral, 91
 Bateman, Lieut., 163
 Bath, Order of the, 278
Belleisle, 372, 375
 Billy Blue, 293, 414
 Biscay, Bay of, 478
 Blair, Lieut., 235, 239, 244
 Blankett, Captain, 47, 52, 167
 Bonaparte, 368
 Boscawen, 19
Bounty, 173
 Brest, 129, 352, 354, 370, 382, 390,
 395, 405, 421, 424, 429, 451, 456,
 469, 478, 480, 485, 493, 498
 Bridport, Lord, 272, 289
 Brimstone Hill, 111
 Brisbane, Captain, 354, 432, 441
Bristol, 82
 Brome, afterwards Lord Cornwallis, 21,
 80, 86, 89, 92, 101, 131, 143, 146,
 153, 165, 176, 190, 194, 203, 228,
 231, 250
 Burgoyne, General, 84
 Burke, William, 151
 Bute, Lord, 29
 Byron, Commodore, 40, 89
- Cadiz, 462, 487, 488
Cæsar, 260
 Calder, Sir R., 392, 394, 400, 428, 470,
 481, 482, 484
 Camaret Bay, 359
 Campbell, Admiral, 374, 390, 391, 394,
 468
- Canada*, 106, 108, 110, 131, 135
 Canterbury, Archbishop of, 92, 103
Chatham, 84
 Chatham, Lord, 152, 207
 Chichester, 342
 Christian, Admiral, 291, 292, 306
 Cochrane, Admiral, 459, 463
 Collingwood, 280, 395, 428, 489
 Contractors, 156
 Cornwallleys, 19
 Cornwallis family—
 Elizabeth, 350, 465, 466, 508
 Harry, 20
 James, Bishop of Lichfield, 21, 24,
 90, 112, 131, 174, 231, 341, 465,
 512, 515, 518
 Mary, Lady, 21, 44
 Lord Cornwallis, 276, 340, 414, 508.
 See also Brome
 Lady C., 85, 89, 133
 Corunna, 394, 411
Crown, 152, 169, 208, 235, 244
 Cotton, Sir C., 426
 Court Martial, 316, 322
Culloden, 261
- Darby, Admiral, 105
 Dashwood, Captain, 365
 D'Auvergne, Captain, 403, 452
 Delaware River, 70, 71
 Delgarno, Captain, 167
 Desertion, 108
 Digby, Admiral, 106
 Dindigul, 185
 Douglas, Captain, 118
Dreadnought, 388
Dunkirk, 19
 Dutch, 389
- East India Company, 176, 235, 239
 East Indies, 145, 168
 Egmont, Lord, 30, 33
 England, Invasion of, 368, 392, 404,
 468, 469, 481
 Erskine, Thomas, 322, 341
Excellent, 260
 Eyles, Captain, 374

- Fitzgerald, Lieut., 291
 Forrest, Commodore, 45
Foudroyant, 138
 France, 162, 206, 209, 231, 247, 250,
 291, 350
 French Revolution, 232, 248

 Ganges, 139
 Ganteaume, 480, 488
 Gardner, Admiral, 472
 Gardner, Lord, 349, 453
 Gibraltar, 105, 481
 Glover, Captain, 97
 Godoy, 461
 Grasse, Admiral de, 110, 111
 Graves, Admiral, 135
 Grenada, 89, 94
 Grenville, 188
 Grenville, Thomas, 320
Guadaloupe, 37, 39

 Hamilton, Lady, 141, 343
 Hamon, Jerome, 404
 Hamond, Captain, 77
 Hawke, 19
 Hickey, William, 165, 167
 Hood, 107, 110, 111, 147, 160, 173,
 198, 200, 207, 231, 259, 317, 368,
 474, 506, 510, 513.
 Hotham, Admiral, 291, 353, 356
 Howe, Lord, 69, 140, 146, 160,
 200, 260, 266, 272, 275, 297, 319

 India, Governor-General, 471
 Ireland, 398, 404, 424, 451, 482
 Ireland, Lord Lieutenant, 344
Isis, 6, 7, 71, 78, 80, 82

 Jackson, Warde, 466
 Jamaica, 45
 Jobbery, Political, 172

 Keppel, Admiral, 32, 33, 135, 137
Kingston, 19

 Lansdowne, Lord, 147, 341
 Lauzun, Duc de, 101
 Leveson-Gower, Captain, 55, 93, 114,
 171, 232
Lion, 85, 90, 95, 99, 102, 105
 London, Corporation of, 417
 Long, Beeston, 59
 Losack, Lieut., 361, 367
 Louisburg, 19

 Macartney, Lord, 89
 Madras, 153, 181, 248
 Malay Archipelago, 152
 Marines, Colonel of, 143
 Maxwell, Lieut., 361, 367
Medea, 84
 Meadows, General, 188, 193
 Melville, 423, 426, 431, 434, 439, 445,
 447, 453, 460, 473
 Middleton, Sir C., 274, 473
Minerva, 249, 259
 Missiessy, 469, 470
 Molloy, Captain, 264
 Mont Christ, 95
 Mud Island Fort, 78
 Mutiny, 108, 173, 261, 315, 373

 Napoleon, 368, 382, 388, 389, 390, 399,
 401, 412, 459, 468, 469, 475, 478,
 479, 481, 482, 484, 485, 498
 Nelson, 102, 129, 141, 145, 157, 200,
 259, 343, 368, 389, 396, 411, 416,
 428, 460, 470, 475, 482, 485, 489,
 493
 Nelson, Lady, 466
Neptune, 20
 Neutral Vessels, 207, 209, 216
Newark, 19
 Newlands, 344, 382, 387, 421, 425, 426,
 473, 499, 508, 513
 New York, 69
 Nile, 343
 Nugent, Admiral, 500, 502, 514

 Orde, Admiral Sir J., 462, 475
Orion, 322
 Owen, Captain, 76

 Pakenham, 343
Pallas, 49
 Parker, Admiral, 70
 Parker, Lieut., 220
 Parker, Sir Peter, 97, 101, 103, 261
 Parliament, 48, 131, 140, 144, 383
 Parliament, thanks of, 281
 Pellew, Sir C., 350, 352, 355, 371, 390,
 394, 396, 408, 409, 416, 460
 Peyton, Admiral, 265
 Philadelphia, 70, 81
 Pilfold, Lieut., 351
 Piquet, La Motte, 97
 Pitt, 30, 311, 349, 423, 468, 476, 503
 Pondicherry, 252

- Portsmouth, 140, 144
Prince, 261
Prince Edward, 36
 Privateers, 355
 Proby, Captain, 22
 Puget, Captain, 429, 444

Queen Charlotte, 139
 Quiberon Bay, 20
 Quinine, 49

 Rainier, Sir Peter, 255
Redoubtable, 394
 Revolution, French, 232, 248
 Ricketts, Lieut., 344
 Riou, 173
Robust, 143
 Rocheford, 355, 371, 390, 421, 469, 478,
 482, 496
 Rodney, Admiral, 31, 48, 98, 110, 112,
 118
Royal Sovereign, 261, 266, 290, 313,
 340
 Royal Yacht, 139
 Russia, 199

 Sandwich, Lord, 48, 85, 106
 Sandy Hook, 106
 Saumarez, Sir J., 350, 351, 352
 Saunders, 20
 Saxton, Sir C., 305, 317
 Schomberg, Captain, 148, 167, 169
 Secret agents, 401
 Seringapatam, 204, 230
 Sotheby, Captain, 354
 Spain, 92, 101, 139, 174, 186, 197, 350,
 389, 408, 409, 451, 459, 468
 Spanish Ambassador, 60
 Spencer, Lord, 277, 294, 304, 308, 310,
 313, 340
 Spry, Commodore, 39
 Strachan, Sir R., 195, 211, 229, 250,
 488, 490
 Submarines, 392
 Sutton, Captain, 395
 Sweden, King of, 233
Swift, 26, 33

Temeraire, 374
 Ternay, De, 99
Thunderer, 20, 22, 24
 Tippoo Sultan, 176, 186, 188, 193, 203,
 211, 228, 230
 Tonnyn, 45
 Toulon, 389, 416
 Townshend, Admiral, 31
 Trafalgar, 483, 487, 489, 491, 493, 500
 Travancore, 176
 Turkey, 199
 Tyrrel, Admiral, 27

 Ushant, 350, 390, 396

Victory, 259, 389, 482
 Villaret-Joyeuse, Admiral, 370
Ville de Paris, 350, 372, 380, 390, 418,
 426, 427, 467, 476, 492, 502
 Villeneuve, 470, 475, 478, 480, 481, 484,
 485, 486, 488
 Vincent, Lord St., 341, 344, 349, 351,
 352, 354, 370, 372, 382, 388, 396,
 416, 423, 459, 474, 476, 503

 Waldegrave, Admiral, 296, 305
 Wallis, Captain, 394
 War of Independence, American, 55,
 67, 74, 110, 139
 Warr, Countess de la, 397
Wasp, 25
 Wells, Rev. C., 179, 184, 191, 203, 228
 West, Mrs., 513, 521
 West Indies, 27, 31, 49, 88, 141, 291,
 313, 469, 470, 475
 Whitby, Captain, 196, 235, 261, 341,
 343, 350, 372, 387, 390, 397, 413,
 418, 422, 473, 475, 485, 492, 502,
 508, 521
 Whitby, Mrs., 387, 396, 397, 417, 422,
 465, 473, 486, 498, 502, 503, 509,
 511, 517, 519

 Yacht, Royal, 139
 Yorke, Captain, 362
 Yorktown, 107
 Young, Admiral, 433, 440, 478
 Young, Captain W., 99

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN
BY UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED
LONDON AND WOKING

Date Due

[illegible]

DA 506 .C83 C6
Cornwallis-West, George F
The life and letters of Admira

010101 000



0 1163 0214618 2
TRENT UNIVERSITY

DA506 .C83C6
Cornwallis-West, George Frederick
Myddelton
The life and letters of Admiral
Cornwallis

DATE

ISSUED TO 222543

222543

